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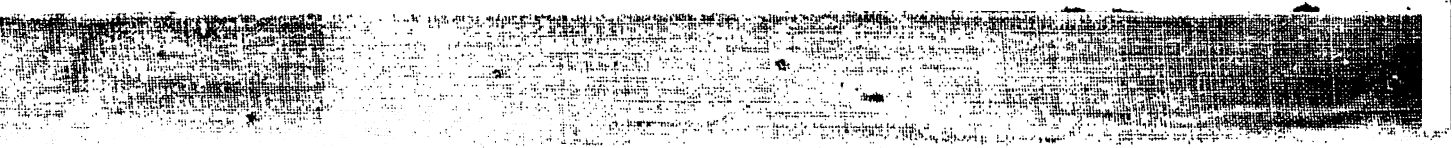
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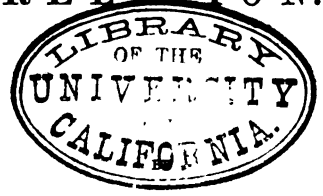
RELIGION.

A

DISCOURSE OF MATTERS

PERTAINING TO

RELIGION.



THEODORE PARKER,

MINISTER OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN ROXBURY, MASS.

"If an offence come out of the Truth, better is it that the offence come, than the Truth be concealed."—JEROME.

LONDON:

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THE PREFACE.

THE following pages contain the substance of a series of five Lectures delivered in Boston, during the last autumn, at the request of several gentlemen. In preparing the work for the press, I have enlarged on many subjects, which could be but slightly touched in a brief lecture. It was with much diffidence that I then gave my opinions to the public in that form; but considering the state of theological learning amongst us, and the frequent abuse of the name of Religion, I can no longer withhold my humble mite.

It is the design of this work to recall men from the transient shows of time, to the permanent substance of Religion; from a worship of Creeds and empty Belief, to a worship in Spirit and in Life. If it satisfy the doubting soul, and help the serious inquirer to true views of God, man, the relation between them, and the duties which come of that relation; if it make Religion appear more congenial and attractive, and a divine life more beautiful and sweet than heretofore—

my end is answered. I have not sought to pull down, but to build up; to remove the rubbish of human inventions from the fair temple of divine Truth, that men may enter its shining gates, and be blessed now and forever.

I have found it necessary — though painful — to speak of many popular delusions, and expose their fallacy and dangerous character, but have not, I trust, been blind to "the soul of goodness in things evil," though I have taken no great pains to speak smooth things, or say Peace, peace, when there was NO peace. The subject of Book IV. might seem to require a greater space than I have allowed it; but a cursory examination of many points there hinted at would require a volume, and I did not wish to repeat what is said elsewhere, and therefore have referred to an "Introduction to the Old Testament on the basis of De Wette," which is now in the press, and will probably come before the public in a few months.* Some of the thoughts here set forth have also appeared in the Dial for 1840–42. I can only wish that the errors of this book may find no favour, but perish speedily, and that the truths it humbly aims to set forth may do their good and beautiful work.

WEST ROXBURY, MASS.
7th May 1842.

* The Work referred to above was published at Boston, U. S., 1843.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

" To false Religion we are indebted for persecutors, zealots, and bigots; and perhaps human depravity has assumed no forms, at once more odious and despicable, than those in which it has appeared in such men. I will say nothing of persecution; it has passed away, I trust for ever; and torture will no more be inflicted, and murder no more committed, under pretence of extending the spirit and influence of Christianity. But the temper which produced it still remains; its parent bigotry is still in existence; and what is there more adapted to excite thorough disgust, than the disposition, the feelings, the motives, the kind of intellect and degree of knowledge discovered by some of those, who are pretending to be the sole defenders and patrons of religious truth in this unhappy world, and the true and exclusive heirs of all the mercy of God? It is a particular misfortune, that when gross errors in religion prevail, the vices of which I speak show themselves especially in the clergy; and that we find them ignorant, narrow-minded, presumptuous, and, as far as they have it in their power, oppressive and imperious. The disgust which this character in those who appear as ministers of religion, naturally produces, is often transferred to Christianity itself. It ought to be associated only with that form of religion by which those vices are occasioned." — ANDREWS NORTON, *Thoughts on true and false Religion*, second edition, pp. 15, 16.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE history of the world shows clearly that Religion is the highest of all human concerns. Yet the greatest good is often subject to the worst abuse. The doctrines and ceremonies that represent the popular religion at this time, offer a strange mingling of truth and error. Theology is often confounded with religion; men exhaust their strength in believing, and have little Reason to inquire with, or solid Piety to live by. It requires no prophet to see that what is popularly taught and accepted as religion is no very divine thing; not fitted to make the world purer, and man more worthy to live in it. In the popular Belief of the present, as of all time, there is something mutable and fleeting; something also which is eternally the same. The former lies on the surface, and all can see it; the latter lies deep and often escapes observation. Our theology is mainly based on the superficial and transient element. It stands by the forbearance of the sceptic. They who rely on it, are always in danger and always in dread. A doubt strongly put, shakes the pulpits of New England, and wakens the thunder of the churches;—the more reasonable the doubt, the greater is the alarm. Do men fear lest the mountains fall? Tradition is always uncertain. "Perhaps yes, perhaps no," is all we can say of it. Yet is it made the basis of Religion. Authority is taken for Truth, and not Truth for Authority. Belief is made the Substance of Re-

ligion, as Authority its Sanction, and Tradition its Ground. The name of Infidel is applied to the best of men, the wisest, the most spiritual and heavenly of our brothers. The bad and the foolish naturally ask, If the name be deserved, what is the use of Religion, as good men and wise men can be good and wise, heavenly and spiritual, without it? The answer is plain—but not to the blind.

Practical Religion implies both a Sentiment and a Life. We honour a phantom which is neither life nor sentiment. Yes, we have two Spectres that often take the place of Religion with us. The one is a Shadow of the sentiment; that is our creed, belief, theology, by whatever name we call it. The other is the Ghost of Life; this is our ceremonies, forms, devout practices. The two Spectres by turns act the part of Religion, and we are called Christians because we assist at the show. Real piety is expected of but few. He is the Christian that bows to the Idol of his Tribe, and sets up also a lesser, but orthodox idol in his own Den. One word of the Prophet is true of our religion—Its voice is not heard in the streets. Our theology is full of confusion. They who admit Reason to look upon it confound the matter still more, for a great revolution of thought alone can set matters right.

Religion is separated from Life, divorced from bed and board. We think to be religious without love for man, and pious with none for God; or, which is the same thing, that we can love our neighbour without helping him, and God without having an Idea of Him. The prevailing theology represents God as a being whom a good man must hate; Religion as something alien to our nature, which can only rise as Reason falls. A despair of man pervades our theology. Pious men mourn at the famine in our churches; we do not believe in the inspiration of goodness now; only in the tradition, of goodness long ago. For all theological purposes, God might have been buried after the ascension of Jesus. We dare not approach the Infinite One face to

face; we whine and whimper in our brother's name, as if we could only appear before the Omnipresent by Attorney.

Our reverence for the Past, is just in proportion to our ignorance of it. We think God was once everywhere in the world—in the Soul; but has now crept into a corner as good as dead; that the Bible was his last word. Instead of the Father of All for our God, we have two Idols,—the Bible, a record of men's words and works; and Jesus of Nazareth, a man who lived divinely some centuries ago. These are the idols of the religious; our standard of truth; the gods in whom we trust. Mammon, the great Idol of men not religious—who overtops them both, and has the truest worshippers—need not now be named. His votaries *know* they are idolaters; the others worship in ignorance, their faith fixed mainly on transient things.

I know there are exceptions to this rule. Saints never fail from the earth. Reason will claim some deserted niche in every church. But wise men grieve over our notions of religion; so poor, so alien to Reason. Pious men weep over our practice of religion; so far from Christianity. What passes for Christianity in our times is not reasonable; no man pretends it. It can only be defended by forbidding a reasonable man to open his mouth. We go from the street to the church. What a change! Reason and good sense and manly energy, which do their work in the world, have here little to do; their voice is not heard. The morality, however, is the same in both places; it has only laid off its working dress, smoothed its face, put on its Sunday-clothes. The popular religion is hostile to man; tells us he is an outcast—not a child of God, but a spurious issue of the devil. He must not even pray in his own name. His duty is an impossible thing. No man can do it. He deserves nothing but damnation. Theology tells him that is all he is sure of. It teaches the doctrine of immortality; but in such guise, that, if true, it is a misfortune to mankind. Its heaven is a place no man has a right to. Would a good

man willingly accept what is not his?—pray for it? This theology rests on a lie. Men have made it out of assumptions. The conclusions came from the premises; but the premises were made for the sake of the conclusions. Each vouches for the other's truth. But what else will vouch for either? The historical basis of popular doctrines, such as Depravity, Redemption, Resurrection, the Incarnation; is it formed of Facts or of No-Facts? Who shall tell us? Do not the wise men look after these things? One must needs blush for the patience of mankind.

But has Religion only the bubble of Tradition to rest on; no other sanction than Authority; no substance but Belief? They know little of the matter who say it. Did Religion begin with what we call Christianity? Were there no Saints before Peter?* Religion is the first thing man learned; the last thing he will abandon. There is but one Religion, as one Ocean; though we call it Faith in our church, and Infidelity out of our church.

It is my design in these pages to recall men from the transient Form to the eternal Substance; from outward and false Belief to real and inward Life; from this partial Theology and its Idols of human device, to that universal Religion and its ever-living God; from the temples of human Folly and Sin, which every day crumble and fall, to the inner sanctuary of the Heart, where the still small voice will never cease to speak. I would show men Religion as she is—most fair of all God's fairest children. If I fail in this, it is the head that is weak, not the heart that is wanting.

BOOK I.

Who is there almost that has not opinions planted in him by education time out of mind; which by that means came to be as the municipal laws of the country, which must not be questioned, but are then looked on with reverence, as the standard of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, when perhaps these so sacred opinions are but the oracles of the nursery, or the traditional grave talk of those who pretend to inform our childhood; who receive them from hand to hand without ever examining them? These ancient preoccupations of our minds, these several and almost sacred opinions, are to be examined if we will make way for truth, and put our minds in that freedom which belongs and is necessary to them. A mistake is not the less so, and will never grow into a truth because we have believed it a long time, though perhaps it be the harder to part with; and an error is not the less dangerous, nor the less contrary to truth, because it is cried up and had in veneration by any party."—LOCKE, *in* KING'S *Life of him*, second edition; Vol. I. pp. 188, 192.



BOOK I.

OF RELIGION IN GENERAL; OR A DISCOURSE OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN MAN, AND THE EXISTENCE OF ITS OBJECT.

As we look on the world which man has added to that which came from the hand of its Maker, we are struck with the variety of its objects, and the contradiction between them. There are institutions to prevent crime; institutions that of necessity perpetuate crime. This is built on selfishness; would stand by the downfall of Justice and Truth. Side by side therewith is another, whose broad foundation is universal love—love for all that are of woman born. Thus we see palaces and hovels; jails and asylums for the weak, arsenals and churches, huddled together in the strangest and most intricate confusion. How shall we bring order out of this chaos; account for the existence of these contradictions? It is serious work to decompose these phenomena, so various and conflicting; to detect the one cause in the many results. But in doing this, we find the root of all in Man himself. In him is the same perplexing antithesis which we meet in all his works. These conflicting things existed as ideas in him before they took their present and concrete shape. Discordant causes have produced effects

not harmonious. Out of man these institutions have grown; out of his passions or his judgment, his senses or his soul. Taken together, they are the exponent which indicates the character and degree of development the race has now attained; they are both the result of the past and the prophecy of the future.

From a survey of society, and an examination of human nature, we come at once to the conclusion, that for every institution out of man, except that of Religion, there is a cause within him, either fleeting or permanent; that the natural wants of the body, the desire of food and raiment, comfort and shelter, have organized themselves, and instituted agriculture and the mechanic arts; that the more delicate principles of our nature, love of the Beautiful, the True, the Good, have their organization also; that the passions have their artillery, and each of the gentler emotions somewhat external to represent themselves, and reflect their image. Thus the institution of Laws, with their concomitants, the Court-house and the Jail, we refer to the Moral Sense of mankind, combining with the despotic selfishness of the strong, whose might often usurps the place of Justice. Factories and Commerce, Railroads and Banks, Schools and Shops, Armies and Newspapers, are quite easily referred to something analogous in the wants of man; to a lasting principle, or a transient desire which has projected them out of itself. Thus we see that these institutions out of man are but the exhibitions of what is in him, and must be referred either to eternal principles, or momentary passions. Society is the work of man. There is nothing in society which is not also in man.

Now there is one vast institution, which extends more widely than human statutes; claims the larger place in human affairs; takes a deeper hold on man than the terrible pomp of War, the machinery of Science, the panoply of Comfort. This is the institution of Religion, coëval and

coëxtensive with the human race. Whence comes this? Is there an eternal principle in man's nature, which legitimately and of necessity leads to this? or does it come, like Piracy, War, the Slave-trade, and so much other business of society, from the abuse, misdirection, and disease of human nature? Shall we refer this vast institution to a passing passion, which the advancing race will outgrow? or does it come from a principle in us deep and lasting as man?

To this question, for many ages two answers have been given — one foolish, and one wise. The foolish answer, which may be read in Lucretius and elsewhere, is, that Religion is not a necessity of man's nature, which comes from the action of eternal demands within him, but is the result of mental disease, so to say — the effect of fear, of ignorance, combining with selfishness; that hypocritical Priests and knavish Kings, practising on the ignorance, the credulity, the passions, and the fears of men, invented for their own sake, and got up a religion, in which they put no belief, and felt no spiritual concern. But judging from a superficial view, it might as well be said that food and comfort were not necessities of man's nature, but only cunning devices of butchers, mechanics, and artists, to gain wealth and power. Besides, it is not given to hypocrites under the mitre, nor over the throne, to lay hold on the world and move it. Honest conviction and living faith are needed for that work. To move the world of man, firm footing is needed. The hypocrite deceives few but himself, as the attempts at pious frauds, in ancient and modern times, abundantly prove.

The wise answer is, that this institution of Religion, like Society, Friendship, and Marriage, comes out of a principle, deep and permanent in the heart;—that as humble, and transient, and partial institutions come out of humble, transient, and partial wants, and are to be traced to the senses and the phenomena of life; so this sublime, permanent, and universal institution, came out from sublime, permanent, and universal wants, and must be referred to the soul, and

the unchanging realities of life. Looking, even superficially, but with earnestness, upon human affairs, we are driven to confess, that there is in man a spiritual nature, which directly and legitimately leads to Religion; that as man's body is connected with the world of Matter—rooted in it—has bodily wants, bodily senses to minister thereto, and a fund of external materials, wherewith to gratify these senses, and appease these wants; so man's soul is connected with the world of Spirit—rooted in God; has spiritual wants and spiritual senses, and a fund of materials wherewith to gratify these spiritual senses, and appease these spiritual wants. If this be so, then do not religious institutions come equally from man? May it not be that there is nothing in Religion, more than in Society, which is not implied in man? Now the existence of a religious element in us, is not a matter of hazardous and random conjecture, nor attested only by a superficial glance at the history of man, but this principle is found out, and its existence demonstrated in several legitimate ways.

We see the phenomena of worship and religious observances—of religious wants, and actions to supply those wants. Work implies a hand that did, and a head that planned it. A sound induction from these facts carries us back to a religious principle in man, though the induction does not determine the nature of this principle, except that it is the cause of these phenomena. This common and notorious fact of religious phenomena being found everywhere, can be explained only on the supposition that man is, by the necessity of his nature, inclined to Religion; that worship, in some form, gross or refined—in act, or word, or thought, or life—is natural and quite indispensable to the race. If the opposite view be taken, that there is no religious principle in man, then there are permanent and universal phenomena without a corresponding cause, and the fact remains unexplained and unaccountable.

Again, we feel conscious of this element within us. We are not sufficient for ourselves; not self-originated; nor self-sustained. A few years ago, and we were not; a few years hence, and our bodies shall not be. A mystery is gathered about our little life. We have but small control over things around us; are limited and hemmed in on all sides. Our schemes fail. Our plans miscarry. One after another, our lights go out. Our realities prove dreams. Our hopes waste away. We are not where we would be, nor what we would be. After much experience, men powerful as Napoleon, victorious as Cæsar, confess, what simpler men knew by instinct long before, that it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps. We find our circumference very near the centre, every where. An exceedingly short radius measures all our strength. We can know little of material things; nothing but their phenomena. As the circle of our knowledge widens its ring, we feel our ignorance on more numerous points, and the Unknown seems greater than before. At the end of a toilsome life, we confess, with a great man of modern times, that we have wandered on the shore, and gathered here a bright pebble, and there a shining shell—but the ocean of Truth, boundless and unfathomed, lies before us, and all unknown. The wisest Ancient knew only this, that he knew nothing. We feel an irresistible tendency to refer all outward things, and ourselves with them, to a power beyond us, sublime and mysterious, which we cannot measure, nor even comprehend. We are filled with reverence at the thought of this power. Outward matters give us the occasion which awakens consciousness, and spontaneous nature leads us to something higher than ourselves, and greater than all the eyes behold. We are bowed down at the thought. Thus the sentiment of something superhuman comes natural as breath. This primitive, spiritual sensation comes over the soul, when a sudden calamity throws us from our habitual state; when joy fills our cup to its brim, at "a wedding or a funeral, a mourning or

a festival;" when we stand beside a great work of nature, a mountain, a waterfall; when the twilight gloom of a primitive forest sends awe into the heart; when we sit alone with ourselves, and turn in the eye, and ask, What am I? Whence came I? Whither shall I go? There is no man who has not felt this sensation, this mysterious sentiment of something unbounded.

Still further, we arrive at the same result from a philosophical analysis of man's nature. We set aside the Body with its senses as the man's house, having doors and windows; we examine the Understanding, which is his handmaid; we separate the Affections, which unite soul with soul; we discover the Moral Sense, by which the man can discern between right and wrong, as by the body's eye between black and white, or night and day; and behind all these, and deeper down, beneath all the shifting phenomena of life, we discover the RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT OF MAN. Looking carefully at this sentiment; separating this as a cause from its actions, and these from their effects; stripping the faculty of all accidental circumstances peculiar to the age, nation, sect, or individual, and pursuing a sharp and final analysis till the subject and predicate can no longer be separated; we find as the ultimate fact, that the religious sentiment is this: A SENSE OF DEPENDENCE.* This sentiment does not, itself, disclose the character, and still less the nature and essence of the object on which it depends; no more than the senses disclose the nature of their objects; no more

* The religious and moral elements mutually involve each other in practice; neither can attain a perfect development without the other; but they are yet as distinct from one another as the faculties of sight and hearing, or memory and imagination. Perhaps all will not agree with that analysis which makes a *sense of dependence* the ultimate fact in the case. This is the statement of Schleiermacher, not to mention more ancient authorities. See his Christliche Glaube nach der Grundsätzen der ev. Kirche, B. I. § 4, p. 15, *et seq.* in his Works; 1 Abt. B. III. Berlin, 1835. Of course a sense of infinite as well as finite dependence is intended. Others may call it a *consciousness of the infinite;* I contend less for the *analysis* than for the *fact* of a religious element in man. This theory has been assailed by several philosophers; amongst others by Hegel. See his Philosophie der Religion, 2d improved edition, B. I. p. 85, *et seq.* in B. XI. of his Works, Berlin, 1840.

han the eye or ear discovers the essence of light or sound. Like them, it acts spontaneously and unconsciously, soon as the outward occasion offers, with no effort of will, forethought, or making up the mind.

Thus, then, it appears that induction from notorious facts; consciousness spontaneously active, and a philosophical analysis of man's nature, all lead equally to some religious sentiment or principle as an essential part of man's constitution. Now when it is stated thus nakedly and abstractly, that man has in his nature a permanent religious element, it is not easy to see on what grounds this primary quality can be denied by any thinking man, who will notice the religious phenomena in history, trust his own consciousness, or examine and analyze the combined elements of his own Being. It is true, men do not often say to themselves, "Go to now. Lo, I have a religious sentiment in the bottom of my heart." But neither do they often say, "Behold, I have hands and feet, and am the same being that I was last night or forty years ago." In a natural and healthy state of mind, men rarely speak or think of what is felt unconsciously to be most true, and the basis of all spiritual action. It is, indeed, most abundantly established, that there is a religious element in man.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SENTIMENT, IDEA, AND CONCEPTION OF GOD.

Now the existence of this religious element—of this sense of dependence, this sentiment of something without bounds, is itself a proof by implication of the existence of its object, —something on which dependence rests. A belief in this relation between the feeling in us, and its object independent of us, comes unavoidably from the laws of man's nature. There is nothing of which we can be more certain.* A natural want in man's constitution implies satisfaction in some quarter, just as the faculty of seeing implies something to correspond to this faculty, namely, objects to be seen and a medium of light to see by. As the tendency to love implies something lovely for its object, so the religious sentiment implies its object. If it is regarded as a sense of absolute dependence, it implies the Absolute on which this dependence rests, independent of ourselves.

Now spiritual, like bodily faculties, act jointly, and not one at a time, and when the occasion is given from without us, Reason, spontaneously, independent of our forethought and volition, acting by its own laws, gives us, by intuition, an IDEA of that on which we depend. To this Idea we give

* The truth of the human faculties must be assumed in all arguments; and if this be admitted, we have then the same evidence for spiritual facts as for the maxims or the demonstrations of Geometry. If any one denies the trustworthiness of the human faculties, there can be no argument with him; the axioms of morals and of mathematics are alike nonsense to such a reasoner. Demonstration presupposes something so certain that it requires no demonstrating. So *Reasoning* presupposes the trustworthiness of *Reason*.

the name of GOD or GODS as it is represented by one or several separate conceptions. Thus the existence of God is implied by the natural sense of dependence, in the religious sentiment itself; it is expressed by the spontaneous intuition of Reason.

Now men come to this Idea early. It is the logical condition of all other ideas; without this as an element of our consciousness, or lying latent, as it were, and unrecognised in us, we could have no *ideas* at all. The senses reveal to us something external to the body, and independent thereof, on which it depends; they tell not what it is. Consciousness reveals something in like manner—not the soul only, but its absolute ground, on which the soul depends. Outward circumstances furnish the occasion by which we approach and discover the Idea of God; but they do not furnish the Idea itself. That is a fact given by the nature of man. Hence some philosophers have called it an innate idea; others a reminiscence of what the soul knew in a higher state of life before it took the body. Both opinions may be regarded as rhetorical statements of the truth that the Idea of God is a fact given by man's nature, and not an invention or device of ours. The belief in God's existence therefore is natural—not against nature. It comes unavoidably from the legitimate action of Reason and the religious sentiment, just as the belief in light comes from using the eyes, and belief in our existence from mere existing. The knowledge of God's existence, therefore, may be called an INTUITION OF REASON in the language of Philosophy; or a REVELATION FROM GOD, in the language of the elder Theology.

If the above statement be correct, then our belief in God's existence does not depend on the *à posteriori* argument—on considerations drawn from the order, fitness and beauty discovered by observations made in the material world; nor yet on the *à priori* argument—on considerations drawn

from the eternal nature of things, and observations made in the spiritual world. It depends primarily on no *argument* whatever, not on *reasoning* but *Reason*. The fact is given outright, as it were, and comes to the man, as soon and as naturally, as the consciousness of his own existence, and is indeed logically inseparable from it, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves except as *dependent* beings.

This intuitive perception of God is afterwards fundamentally and logically established by the *à priori* argument, and beautifully confirmed by the *à posteriori* argument; but we are not left without the Idea of God till we become metaphysicians and naturalists, and so can discover it by much thinking. It comes spontaneously, by a law, of whose action we are, at first, not conscious. The belief always precedes the proof; intuition gives the thing to be reasoned about. Unless this intuitive function be performed, it is not possible to attain a knowledge of God. All arguments to that end must be addressed to a faculty which cannot originate the Idea of God, but only confirm it when given from some other quarter. Any argument is vain when the logical condition of all argument has not been complied with.* If the reasoner, as Dr. Clarke has done, presuppose that his opponent has "no transcendent idea of God," all his reasoning could never produce it, howsoever capable of confirming and legitimating that idea if already existing in the consciousnesss. As we may speak of sights to the blind, and sounds to the deaf, and convince them that things called sights and sounds actually exist, but can furnish no *Idea* of those things when there is no corresponding sensation; so we may convince a man's understanding of the soundness of our argumentation, but yet give him no Idea of God unless he have previously an intuitive sense thereof. Without

* Kant has abundantly shown the insufficiency of all the *philosophical arguments* for the existence of God,— the physico-theological, the cosmological, and the ontological; Kritik der reinen Vernunft, 7th edition, p. 444, *et seq.* But the fact of the Idea given in man's nature cannot be got rid of.

the intuitive perception, the metaphysical argument gives us only an idea of abstract Power and Wisdom; the argument from design gives only a limited and imperfect Cause for the limited and imperfect effects. Neither reveals to us the Infinite God.

The Idea of God, then, transcends all possible external experience, and is given by intuition, or revelation, which comes of the joint and spontaneous action of Reason and the religious sentiment.* Now *theoretically* this Idea involves no contradiction, and is perfect: that is, when the proper conditions are complied with, and nothing disturbs the free action of the soul, we receive the Idea of a Being, infinite in Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; that is, infinite, or perfect, in all possible relations. But *practically*, in the majority of cases, these conditions are not observed; men attempt to form a complex and definite *conception* of God. The primitive Idea, eternal in man, is lost sight of. The conception of God, as men express it in their language, is always imperfect, sometimes self-contradictory and impossible. Human actions, human thoughts, human feelings — yes, human passions and all the limitations of mortal man, are collected about the Idea of God. Its primitive simplicity and beauty are lost. It becomes self-destructive; and the conception of God, as many minds set it forth, like that of a Griffin, or Centaur, or "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," is self-contradictory; the notion of a being who, from the very nature of things, could not exist. They for the most part have been called Atheists who denied the popular conception of God, showed its inconsistency, and proved that such a being could not be.† The early

* The Idea of God, like that of Liberty and Immortality, may be called a *judgment à priori*, and from the necessity of the case transcends all objective experience, as it is logically anterior to it.

† The best men have often been branded as Atheists. The following benefactors of the world have borne that stigma: — Thales, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophanes, and both the Zenos; Cicero, Seneca, Abelard, Galileo, Kepler, Des Cartes, Leibnitz, Wolf, Locke, Cudworth, Samuel Clarke, Jacob Böhme;

Christians and all the most distinguished and religious philosophers have borne that name, simply because they were too far before men for their sympathy, too far above them for their comprehension, and because, therefore, their Idea of God was sublimer and nearer the truth than that held by their opponents.

Now the *conception* we form of God, under the most perfect circumstances, must, from the nature of things, fall short of the reality. The finite can form no adequate conception or imagination of the Infinite. All the conceptions of the human mind are conceived under the limitation of Time and Space—of dependence on a cause exterior to itself; while the Infinite is necessarily free from these limitations. Man can comprehend no form of being but his own finite form, which answers to the Supreme Being even less than a grain of dust to the world itself. There is no conceivable ratio between Finite and Infinite.* Our human personality† gives a false modification to all our conceptions

Kant and Fichte, and Schelling and Hegel, are still under the ban. See some curious details of this subject in Reimmann's Historia Atheismi, &c., 1725,—a dull book but profitable. See also "Historical Sketch of Atheism," by Dr. Pond, in American Biblical Repository, for Oct. 1839, p. 320, *et seq.*

Possevin, in his Bibliotheca, puts Luther and Melancthon among the Atheists. Mersenne, in his Comment. in Geneseos, says, that in 1622 there were 50,000 Atheists in Paris alone, often a dozen in a single house. See some curious details respecting the literary treatment of the subject, in J. G. Walch's Philosophisches Lexicon, 2d edit., Leip. 1733, pp. 134–146. Dr. Woods, in his translation of Knapp's Theology, New York, 1831, 2 vols. 8vo, in a note borrowed from Hahn's Lehrbuch der Christ. Glaubens, p. 175, *et seq.*, places Dr. PRIESTLEY among the modern Atheists, where also he puts De la Mettrie, Von Holbach (or La-Grange), Helvetius, Diderot, and d'Alembert. Such catalogues are instructive. But see Clarke's Classification of Atheists at the beginning of his discourse, above quoted, in his Works, Vol. II. p. 521, *et seq.*

* M. Cousin thinks God is comprehensible by the human spirit, and even attempts to construct the "intellectual existence" of God. Creation he makes the easiest thing in the world to conceive of! See his Introduction to the History of Philosophy, Linberg's Translation, p. 132–143. One would naturally think human presumption could go no farther; but this pleasing illusion is dispelled by the perusal of some of his opponents. See also Ripley, l. c. Vol. I. p. 271, *et seq.*

† Xenophanes saw farther into the secret than some others, when he said, that if Horses or Lions had hands, and were to represent each his Deity, it would be a *Horse*

of the Infinite. But if, not resting in the sentiment of God, which is vague, and leads rather to pantheistic mysticism than to a *reasonable* faith, we take the fact given in our nature, the primitive Idea of God, as a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, involves no contradiction. This is, perhaps, the most faithful expression of the Idea that words can convey. This language does not define the nature of God, but distinguishes our Idea of Him from all other ideas and conceptions whatever. Some great religious souls have been content with this native idea; have found it satisfactory both to Faith and Reason, and confessed with the ancients, that no man by searching could perfectly find out God. Others project their own limitations upon their conception of God, making Him to appear such an one as themselves; thus they reverse the saying of Scripture, and creating a phantom in their own image, call it God. Thus while the *Idea of God*, as a fact given in man's nature, and affording a consistent representation of its Object, is permanent and alike in all; while the *Sentiment of God*, though vague and mysterious, is always the same in itself; the popular *Conception of God* is of the most various and evanescent character, and is not the same in any two ages or men. The Idea is the substance; the Conception a transient phenomenon, which at best only imperfectly represents the substance. To possess the Idea of God, though latent in us, is unavoidable; to feel its comfort is natural; to dwell in the Sentiment of God is delightful; but to frame an adequate conception of Deity, and set this forth in words, is not only above human capability, but impossible in the nature of things. The abyss of God is not to be fathomed save by Him who is All-in-all.

or a *Lion*, for these animals would impose their limitations on the Godhead just as man has done. See the passage in Eusebius, Præp. Ev. XIII. 13, and Clemens Alex. Strom. V. 14.

CHAPTER III.

EXTENT AND POWER OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.

Now this innate religious sentiment is the basis and cause of all Religion. Without this internal religious element, either man could not have any religious notions, nor become religious at all, or else Religion would be something foreign to his nature, which he might yet be taught mechanically from without, as bears are taught to dance, and parrots to talk; but which, like this acquired and unnatural accomplishment of the beast and the bird, would divert him from his true nature and perfection, rendering him a monster, but less of a man than he would be without the superfœtation of this Religion upon him. Without a moral nature, we could have no duties in respect to man; without a religious nature, no duties in respect to God. The foundation of each is in man, not out of him. If man have not a religious nature, miraculous or other revelations can no more render him religious than fragments of Sermons and leaves of the Bible can make a Lamb religious when mixed and eaten with its daily food. The Law, the Duty, and the Destiny of man, as of all God's creatures, is writ in himself, and by the Almighty's hand.* The religious element exist-

* See the treatise of Cicero on the foundation of duties in the essay De Legibus, Lib. I. It may surprise some men that a Pagan should come at the truth which lies at the bottom of all moral obligation, while so many moralists have shot wide of the mark. See the discussion of the same subject, and a very different conclusion, in Paley's Moral Philosophy, and Dymond's Essays.

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ing within us, and this alone, renders Religion the duty, the privilege, and the welfare of mankind. Thus Religion is not a superinduction upon the race, as some would make it appear—not an after-thought of God interpolated in human affairs, when the work was otherwise complete; but it is an original necessity of man's nature; the religious sentiment is deep, and essentially laid in the very foundation of man.

I. Now this religious element is universal. This may be proved in several ways. Whatever exists in the fundamental nature of one man, exists likewise in all men, though in different degrees, and variously modified by different circumstances. Human nature is the same in the men of all races, ages, and countries. Man remains always identical; only the differing circumstances of climate, condition, culture, race, nation and individual, modify the manifestations of what is at bottom the same. Races, ages, nations and individuals, differ only in the various degrees they possess of particular faculties, and in the development or the neglect of these faculties. When, therefore, it is shown that the religious sentiment exists as a natural principle in any one man, its existence in all other men that are, were, or shall be, follows unavoidably from the unity of human nature.

Again, the universality of the religious element is confirmed by historical arguments, which also have some force. We discover religious phenomena in all lands, wherever man is found. They appear alike in the rudest and most civilized state; among the cannibals of New Zealand, and the refined voluptuaries of old Babylon; in the Esquimaux fisherman and the Parisian philosopher. The history of man shows no period in which these phenomena do not appear. Man worships in spirit; feels dependence and accountability, and gives signs of these spiritual emotions all the world over. No nation has been found so savage that they have not attained this—none so refined as to outgrow it. The widest observation, therefore, as well as a philosophical

and necessary deduction from the nature of man, warrants the conclusion that this sentiment is universal.*

But there are some apparent exceptions to this rule, at first glance. A few persons from time to time arise and claim the name of Atheist. But even they admit that they feel this religious tendency; they acknowledge a sense of dependence, which they refer, not to the sound action of a natural element in their constitution, but to a disease of the soul, to the influence of culture, the instruction of their nurses, and count it as an obstinate disease of their mind, or else a prejudice, early imbibed and not easily removed.† Even if some one could be found who denied that he ever felt any religious emotion whatever, however feebly, this would prove nothing against the universality of its existence, and no more against the general rule of its manifestation, than the rare fact of a child born with a single arm, proves against the general rule that man by nature has two arms.

Again, travellers tell us some nations have no God, no Priests, no Worship, and therefore give no sign of the existence of the religious element in them. Admitting they state a fact, we are not to conclude the religious element is wanting in the savages; only that they, like infants, have not attained the proper stage when we could discover signs of its action. But these travellers are mistaken.† Their

* Empirical observation alone would not teach the *universality* of this element, unless it were detected *in each man*, for a generalization can never go beyond the facts it embraces; but observation, so far as it goes, confirms the abstract conclusion which we reach independent of observation.

† See Hume's Natural History of Religion, Introduction. Essays, Lond. 1822, Vol. II. p. 379.

‡ It seems surprising that so acute a philosopher as Locke (Essays, B. I. ch. 4, § 8) should *prove a negative by hearsay*, and assert on such evidence as Rhoe, Jo. de Lery, Martiniere, Tory, Ovington, &c., that there were "whole nations amongst whom there was to be found no notion of a God, no religion." See the able remarks of his friend Shaftesbury (who is most unrighteously reckoned a speculative enemy to religion) against this opinion, in his Characteristics, ed. 1758, Vol. IV. p. 81, *et seq.*, 8th Letter to a Student, &c. Some writers seem to think Christianity is never safe until they have shown, as they fancy, that men cannot, by the natural exercise of

observations have, in such cases, been superficial, made with but a slight knowledge of the manners and customs of the nation they treat of. And, besides, their prejudice blinded their eyes. They looked for a regular worship, doctrines of religion, priests, temples, images, forms and ceremonies. But there is one stage of religious development in which none of these signs appear; and yet the religious sentiment is at its work. The travellers, not finding the usual signs of worship, denied the existence of worship itself, and even of any religious element in the nation. But if they had found a people ignorant of cookery, and without the implements of that art, it would be quite as wise to conclude from this negative testimony, that the nation never ate nor drank. On such evidence, the early Christians were convicted of Atheism by the Pagans, and subsequently the Pagans by the Christians.*

There is still one other case of apparent exception to the rule. Some persons have been found, who in early childhood were separated from human society, and grew up towards the years of maturity in an isolated state, having no contact with their fellow-mortals. These give no signs of

his faculties, attain a knowledge of even the simplest and most obvious religious truths. Many foolish books have been based on this idea, which is yet the staple of many sermons.

It is not long since the whole nation of the Chinese were accused of Atheism, and that by writers so respectable as Le Père de Sainte Marie, and Le Père Longobardi. See, who will, Leibnitz's refutation of the charge. Opp. ed. Dutens, Vol. IV. Part I. p. 170, *et seq.*

* Winslow, with others, at first declared the American Indians had no religion or knowledge of God; but he afterwards corrected his mistake. See Francis's Life of Eliot, p. 32, *et seq.* Even Meiners, Kritische Geschichte der Religionen, Vol. I., p. 11–12, admits there is no nation without religious observances. See also Catlin's Letters, &c. on the North American Indians, New York, 1841, Vol. I. p. 156. See also in Pritchard's Physical History of Mankind, 4th ed., London 1841, Vol. I. p. 188, the statements relative to the Esquimaux, and his correction of the erroneous and ill-natured accounts of others. If any nation is destitute of religious opinions and observances, it must be the Esquimaux, and the Bushmen of South Africa, who seem to be the lowest of the human race. But it is clear, from the statements of travellers and missionaries, that both have religious sentiments and opinions. See some of the most important evidence collected in Pritchard. The Heathen philosophers admitted it as a fact *universally acknowledged*, that there was a God.

the religious sentiment in their nature. But other universal faculties of the race, the tendency to laugh, and to speak articulate words, give quite as little sign of their existence.* But when these unfortunate persons are exposed to the ordinary influence of life, the religious, like other faculties, does its work. Hence we may conclude it existed, though dormant until the proper conditions for its development were supplied. These three apparent exceptions serve only to confirm the rule that the religious sentiment, like the power of attention, thought, and love, is universal in the race.

However, like other faculties, this is possessed in different degrees by different races, nations, and individuals, and at particular epochs of the world's or the individual's history acquires a predominance it has not at other times. It seems God never creates two races, nations, or men, with precisely the same endowments. There is a difference, more or less striking, between the intellectual, æsthetic, and moral development of two races, or nations, or even between two men of the same race and nation. This difference seems to be the effect, not merely of the different circumstances whereto they are exposed, but also of the different endowments with which they set out. If we watch in history the gradual development and evolution of the human race, we see that one nation takes the lead in the march of mind, pursues science, literature, and the arts; another in war, and the practical business of political thrift; while a third nation, prominent neither for science nor political skill, takes the lead in Religion, and in the comparative purity of its religious conceptions surpasses both.

Three forms of monotheistic Religion have, at various times, come up in the world's history. Two of them at this moment outnumber the votaries of all other religions, and divide between them the more advanced civilization of man-

* See a collection of the most remarkable of these cases in Jahn's Appendix Hermeneuticæ, etc. Viennæ 1815, Vol. II. p. 208, *et seq.*, and the authors there cited.

kind. These three are the Mosaic, the Christian, and the Mahometan; all recognizing the unity of God, the religious nature of man, and the relation between God and man. All of these, surprising as it is, came from one family of men, who spoke, in substance, the same language, lived in the same country, and had the same customs and political institutions. Even that wide-spread and more monstrous form of Religion, which our fathers had in the wilds of Europe, betrays its likeness to this Oriental stock; and that form, still earlier, which dotted Greece all over with its temples, and filled the isles of the Mediterranean with its solemn and mysterious chant, came obviously from the same source.* The beautiful spirit of the Greek, modified, enlarged, and embellished what oriental piety alone called down from the Empyrean. The nations now at the head of modern civilization do not appear possessed of *creative religious genius*, so to say, for each form of worship that has prevailed with them is derived from some other race, and has perhaps lost more than it has gained by the transfer. These nations are more scientific than religious; reflective rather than spontaneous; utilitarian more than reverential; and, so far as history informs us, have never created a mode of Religion. Their faith, like their choicer fruits, is an importation from abroad, not an indigenous plant, though now happily naturalized, and rendered productive in their soil. Of all nations hitherto known, these are the most disposed to reflection, literature, science, and the practical arts; while the Shemitish tribes are above all others religious, and have an influence in history entirely disproportionate to their numbers, their arts, their science, or their laws. Out of the heart of this ancient people flowed forth that triple stream of pious life, which even now gives energy to the pulsations of the world. Egypt and Greece have stirred the intellect

* This Orientalism of the religious opinions among the Europeans has led to some very absurd conceits. See a notorious instance in Davie's Mythology of the Druids.

of mankind, and spoken to our love of the Grand, the Beautiful, the True—faculties that lie deep in us. But this Oriental people have touched the soul of man, and awakened reverence for the Good, the Holy, the Altogether Beautiful, which lies in the profoundest deep of all. The religious element appears least conspicuous, perhaps, in some nations of Australia: with savages in general it is in its infancy, like all the nobler attributes of man; but as man developes his nature, this faculty becomes more and more apparent.*

II. Again. This element is indestructible in human nature. It is not in the power of caprice within, nor external circumstances, war or peace, freedom or slavery, ignorance or refinement, wholly to abolish or destroy it. Its growth may be retarded, or quickened; its power misdirected, or suffered to flow in its proper channel. But no violence from within, no violence from without, can ever destroy this element. It were as easy to extirpate hunger and thirst from the sound living body, as this sentiment from the soul. It may sleep: it never dies. Kept down by external force to-day, it flames up to heaven in streams of light to-morrow. When perverted from its natural course, it writes, in devastation, its chronicle of wrongs—a horrid page of human history—which proves its awful and mysterious power, as the strength of the human muscle is proved by the distortions of the maniac. Sensual men, who hate the restraints of Religion, who know nothing of its encouragements, strive to pluck up by the roots this plant which God has set in the midst of the Garden. But there it stands—the tree of Knowledge, the tree of Life. Even such as boast the name of Infidel and Atheist find, unconsciously, repose in its wide shadow, and refreshment in its fruit. It blesses obedient man. He who violates the divine law, and thus would wring this feel-

* M. Comte takes a very different view of the matter, and has both fact and philosophy against him.

ing from his heart, feels it, like a heated iron, in the marrow of his bones.

III. Still further. This religious sentiment is the strongest and deepest element in human nature. It depends on nothing outside, conventional or artificial. It is identical in all men; not a similar thing, but the same. Superficially, man differs from man, in the less and more; but in the nature of the sentiment all agree, as in whatever is deepest and most divine. Out of the profoundest abyss in man proceed his worship, his prayer, his hymn of praise. The history of the world shows us what a space Religion fills. She is the mother of Philosophy and the Arts; has presided over the greatest wars. She holds now all nations with her unseen hand; restrains their passions more powerfully than all the cunning statutes of the lawgiver; awakens their virtue; allays their sorrows with a mild comfort all her own; brightens their hopes with the purple ray of faith, shed through the sombre curtains of necessity.

Religion founds society—inspires the Lawgiver and the Artist—is the deep-moving principle. Religion has called forth the greatest heroism of past ages; the proudest deeds of daring and endurance have been done in her name. Without Religion, all the sages of a kingdom cannot build a city; but with it, a rude fanatic sways the mass of men. The greatest works of human art have risen only at Religion's call. The marble is pliant at her magic touch, and seems to breathe a pious life. The chiseled stone is instinct with a living soul, and stands there, silent, yet full of hymns and prayers; an embodied aspiration, a thought with wings that mock at space and time. The Temples of the East, the Cathedrals of the west—Altar and Column and Statue and Image—these are the tribute Art pays to her. Whence did Michael Angelo, Phidias, Praxiteles, and all the mighty sons of Art, who chronicled their ~~awful~~ sublime thoughts in stone, shaping brute matter to a divine form, or building up the

pyramid and colonnade, or forcing the hard elements to swell into the arch, aspire into the dome or the fantastic tower,—whence did they draw their inspiration? All their greatest wonders are wrought in Religion's name. In the very dawn of time, Genius looks through the clouds and lifts up his voice in hymns and songs and stories of the Gods, and the Angel of Music carves out her thanksgiving, her penitence, her prayers for man, on the unseen air, as a votive gift for her. Her sweetest note, her most majestic chant, she breathes only at Religion's call. Thus it has always been. Men are found without cities, towns, houses—without lights for the dark, or clothes for the cold; without Religion—no nation. A thousand men will become celibate monks for Religion. Would they for Gold, or Ease, or Fame?

The greatest sacrifices ever made are offered in the name of Religion. For this, man will forego ease, peace, friends, society, wife and child, all that mortal flesh holds dearest; no danger is too dangerous—no suffering too stern to bear, if Religion say the word. Simeon the Stylite will stand years long on his pillar's top; the devotee of Budha and Fo tear off his palpitating flesh to serve his God. The Pagan idolator, bowing down to a false image of Stone, renounces his possessions, submits to barbarous and cruel rites, shameful mutilations of his limbs; gives the first-born of his body for the sin of his soul; casts his own person to destruction, because he dreams Baal or Saturn, Jehovah or Moloch, demands the sacrifice. The Christian idolator, doing equal homage to a lying thought, gives up Common Sense, Reason, Conscience, Love of his brother, at the same fancied mandate; is ready to credit the most obvious absurdities, accept contradictions, do what conflicts with the moral sense; believe dogmas that make life dark, eternity dreadful, man a worm, and God a tyrant—dogmas that make him count as cursed half his brother men, because told such is his duty, in the name of Religion. In this name Thomas More, the

ablest head of his times, will believe a bit of bread becomes the Almighty God, when a lewd priest mumbles his juggling Latin, and lifts up his hands. In our day, heads able as Thomas More's believe doctrines quite as absurd, because taught as Religion, and God's command. In its behalf, the most foolish teaching becomes acceptable; the foulest doctrines, the grossest conduct—crimes that, like the fabled banquet of Thyestes, might make the sun sicken at the sight and turn back affrighted in his course,—these things are counted as beautiful, superior to Reason, acceptable to God. The wicked man may bless his brother in crime—the unrighteous blast the holy with his curse, and devotees shall shout "Amen!" to both the blessing and the ban.

On what other authority have rites so bloody been accepted? or doctrines so false to reason, so libellous of God? For what else has man achieved such works, and made such sacrifice? In what name but this, will the man of vast and far out-stretching mind, the Counsellor, the Chief, the Sage, the native King of men, forego the vastness of his thought, put out his spirit's eyes, and bow him to a drivelling wretch who knows nothing but treacherous mummery and juggling tricks? In Religion this has been done from the first false prophet to the last false priest, and the pride of the Understanding is abased; the supremacy of Reason degraded; the majesty of Conscience trampled on; the beautifulness of Faith and Love trodden down into the mire of the streets. The hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the tongue, the most sacred members of the body—judgment, imagination, the over-mastering faculties of mind—justice, mercy, and love, the fairest affections of the soul,—all these have been reckoned a poor and paltry sacrifice, and lopped off at the shrine of God as things unholy. This has been done, not only by Pagan polytheists, and savage idolators, but by Christian devotees, accomplished scholars, the enlightened men of enlightened times.

These melancholy results, which are but aberrations of

the religious sentiment—the disease, not the soundness of mankind—have often been confounded with Religion itself, or regarded as its legitimate fruit. Hence men have said, "such results prove that Religion itself is a popular fury; the foolishness of the people; the madness of mankind." They prove a very different thing. They show the depth, the strength, the awful power of that element, which thus can overmaster all the rest of man, passion and conscience, reason and love. Tell a man his interest requires a sacrifice, he hesitates; convince him his Religion demands it, and crowds rush at once, and joyfully, to a martyr's fiery death. It is the best things that are capable of the worst abuse; the very abuse may test the value.*

* On this theme, see the forcible and eloquent remarks of Professor Whewell, in his Sermons on the foundation of morals, 2d edition, p. 28, *et seq.*, a work well worthy, in its spirit and general tone, of his illustrious predecessors, "the Latitude men about Cambridge," in the brightest noon of England's intellect.

CHAPTER IV.

THE IDEA OF RELIGION CONNECTED WITH SCIENCE AND LIFE.

Now the legitimate action of the religious element produces reverence. This reverence may ascend into Trust, Hope, and Love, which is according to its nature; or descend into Doubt, Fear, and Hate, which is against its nature. It thus rises, or falls, as it coëxists in the individual with wisdom and goodness, or with ignorance and vice. However, the legitimate and normal action of the religious sentiment leads straightway, and of necessity, to reverence, absolute trust, and perfect love of God. These are the results of its sound and healthy action. Thus there can be but one kind of Religion, as there can be but one kind of time and space. It may exist in different degrees, weak or powerful; in combination with other sentiments—love or hate, with wisdom or folly; and thus it is superficially modified, just as love, which is always the same thing, is modified by the character of the man who feels it, and by that of the object to which it is directed. Of course, then, there is no difference but of words between *revealed* Religion and *natural* Religion; for all actual Religion is revealed in us, or it could not be felt, and all revealed religion is natural, or it would be of no use.* What is of use to man lies in the plane of

* This distinction between natural and revealed religion is very old. But it is evidently a distinction in *form*, not in *substance*. The terms seem to have arisen from taking an exclusive view of some *positive* and *historical* form of religion: all religions claim to have been *revealed*.

his consciousness, neither above it nor below it. We may regard this one Religion from different points of view, and give corresponding names to our partial conceptions, which we have purposely limited, and so speak of natural and revealed religion — Monotheistic, Polytheistic or Pantheistic, Pagan, Jewish, Christian, Mahometan religion. But in these cases the distinction indicated by the terms belongs to the thinker's mind, not to Religion itself, the object of thought. Historical phenomena of Religion vary in the more and less. Some express it purely and beautifully; others mingle foreign emotions with it, and but feebly represent the pious feeling.

To determine the question what is Absolute — that is, perfect — Religion, we are not to gather to a focus the scattered rays of all the various forms under which Religion has appeared in history, for we can never collect the Absolute from any number of imperfect phenomena; and besides, in making the search and forming an eclecticism from all the historical religious phenomena, we presuppose in ourselves the criterion by which they are judged; namely, the Absolute itself which we seek to construct, and thus move only in a circle, and end where we began. To answer the question, we must go back to the primitive facts of religious consciousness within us. Then we find religion is VOLUNTARY OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD — INWARD AND OUTWARD OBEDIENCE to that law he has written on our nature, revealed in various ways, through Instinct, Reason, Conscience, and the Religious Sentiment. Through it we regard Him as the absolute object of Reverence, Faith, and Love.* This obe-

* The above definition or Idea of Religion is not given as the only or the best that can possibly be given, but simply as my own, the best I can find; — if others have a better, I shall rejoice at it. I will give some of the more striking that have been set forth by others. Plato: "A Likeness to God, according to our ability." John Smith: "God is first Truth and primitive Goodness. True Religion is a vigorous efflux and emanation of both upon the Spirit of man, and therefore is called a par-

dience may be unconscious, as in little children who have known no contradiction between duty and desire; and perhaps also in the perfect saint, to whom all duties are desirable, who has ended the contradiction by willing himself God's will, and thus becoming one with God. It may be conscious, as with many men whose strife is not yet over.

Now there are two tendencies connected with Religion. One is speculative: here the man is employed in matters pertaining to Religion, to God, to man's religious nature, and his relation and connection with God. The result of this tendency is Theology. This is not Religion itself: it is man's thought about Religion; the philosophy of divine things; the science of Religion. Its sphere is the mind of man. Religion and Theology are no more to be confounded than the stars with astronomy. Religion itself is always the same: Theology changes from age to age. The most various doctrines may exist in connection with Religion. But it depends not on them.*

The other tendency is practical: here the man is employed

ticipation of the divine nature. Religion is a heaven-born thing; the seed of God in the spirits of men whereby they are formed to a similitude and likeness of Himself." Kant: "Reverence for the moral law as a divine command." Schelling: "The union of the Finite and the Infinite." Fichte: "Faith in a moral government of the world." Hegel: "Morality becoming conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence." This will convey no idea to one not acquainted with the peculiar phraseology of Hegel. It seems to mean, Perfect mind becoming conscious of itself. Schleiermacher: "Immediate self-consciousness of the absolute dependence of all the finite on the infinite." Hase: "Striving after the Absolute, which is in itself unattainable; but by love of it man participates of the divine perfection." Wollaston: "An obligation to *do* what ought not to be omitted, and to *forbear* what ought not to be done." Jeremy Taylor: "The whole duty of man, comprehending in it justice, charity, and sobriety."

* Much difficulty has arisen from this confusion of Religion and Theology; it is one proximate cause of that rancorous hatred which exists between the *theological* parties of the present day. Each connects Religion exclusively with its own sectarian theology. But there were great men before Agamemnon; good men before Moses. Theology is a natural product of the human mind. Each man has some notion of divine things — that is, a *theology;* if he collect them into a system, it is a *system of theology*, which differs from that of every other man living. There is but one Religion, though many Theologies.

in acts of obedience to Religion. The result of this tendency is Morality. This is not Religion itself, but the life Religion demands. There may be morality deep and true with little Religion, for a sharp analysis separates between the religious and moral elements in man.* Morality is the harmony between man's action and God's law;—it is the sign of Religion. In its highest and only true form, it implies Religion, just as Wisdom implies Love. Piety, or Love of God, is the substance of Religion; morality, or love of man, its form: they mutually involve one another. Still experience shows that man may see and observe the distinction between right and wrong, clearly and disinterestedly, without consciously feeling as such, reverence, or love of God; that is, he may be truly moral up to a certain point, without being religious, though he cannot be truly religious without at the same time being moral also. But in a harmonious man, the two are as practically inseparable as substance and form. The purely moral man, in the actions, thoughts, and feelings which relate to his fellow-mortal, obeys the eternal law of duty, revealed in his nature, as such, and from love of that law, without regard to its Author. The religious man obeys the same law, but regards it as the will of God. One rests in the Law, the other only in its Author.

Now Religion itself must be the same thing in each man; not a similar thing, but just the same thing; differing only in *degree*, not in kind, and in its *direction* towards one or many objects; in both of which particulars it is influenced in some measure by external circumstances. Now, since man exists under most various conditions, and in widely different

* It seems plain, that the ethical and religious element in man are not the same; at least, that they are as unlike as Memory and Imagination, though, like those, they act most harmoniously in conjunction. It is true, we cannot draw a line between them as between sight and hearing, but this inability to tell where one begins and the other ends, is no argument against the separate existence of the faculties themselves. See Kant, Religion, *Vorrede*.

degrees of civilization, it is plain that the religious element must appear under various forms, accompanied with various doctrines, as to the number and nature of its Objects—the Deities; with various rites, forms, and ceremonies, as its means to appease, propitiate, and serve these Objects; with various organizations, designed to accomplish the purposes which Religion is supposed to demand; and in short, with apparently various and even opposite effects upon life and character. As all men are at bottom the same, but as no two nations or ages are exactly alike in character, circumstances, or development, therefore, though the religious element be the same in all, we must expect to find that its manifestations are never exactly alike in any two ages or nations, though they give the same name to their form of worship. If we look still more minutely, we see that no two men are exactly alike in character, circumstances, and development, and therefore that no two men can exhibit their Religion in just the same way, though they kneel at the same altar, and pronounce the same creed. From the difference between men, it follows, that there must be as many different subjective conceptions of God, and forms of Religion, as there are men and women who think about God, and apply their thoughts and feelings to life. Hence, though Religion itself is always the same in all, the doctrines of Religion or theology—the forms of Religion, or mode of worship—and the practice of Religion, which is morality,—cannot be the same thing in any two men, though one mother bore them, and they were educated in the same way. The conception we form of God—our notion about man—of the relation between him and God—of the duties which grow out of that relation,—may be taken as the exponent of all the man's thoughts, feelings and life. They are therefore alike the measure and the result of the total development of a man, an age, or race. If these things are so, then the phenomena of Religion—like those of Science and Art—must vary from land to land, and age to

age, with the varying civilization of mankind; must be one thing in New Zealand and the first century, and something quite different in New England and the fifty-ninth century. They must be one thing in the wise man, and another in the foolish man. They must vary also in the same individual, for a man's wisdom, goodness, and general character, affect the phenomena of his Religion. The Religion of the boy and the man—of Saul the youth, and Paul the aged—how unlike they appear! The boy's prayer will not fill the man's heart; nor the stripling son of Zebedee comprehend that devotion and life which he shall enjoy when he becomes the saint mature in years.

CHAPTER V.

THE THREE GREAT HISTORICAL FORMS OF RELIGION.

LOOKING at the religious history of the race, and especially at that portion of the human race which has risen highest in the scale of progress, we see that the various phenomena of Religion may be summed up in three distinct classes or types, corresponding to three distinct degrees of civilization, and almost inseparable from them. These are FETICHISM, POLYTHEISM, and MONOTHEISM. But this classification is imperfect, and wholly external, though of use for the present purpose. It must be borne in mind, that we never find a nation in which either mode prevails alone. Nothing is truer than this, that minds of the same spiritual growth see the same spiritual truth. Thus a savage saint, living in a nation of Idolaters or Polytheists, worships the one true God, as Jesus of Nazareth has done. In a Christian land, superstitious men may be found, who are as much Idolaters as Nebuchadnezzar or Jeroboam.

I. Fetichism denotes the worship of visible objects, such as beasts, birds, fishes, insects, trees, mountains, the stars, the sun, the moon, the earth, the sea and air, as types of the Infinite Spirit. It is the worship of Nature.* It includes

* It will probably be denied by some that these objects were worshipped as symbols of the Deity. It seems, however, that even the most savage nations regarded their Idols only as Types of God. On this subject see Constant, Religion, &c., 5 vols. 1824; Oldendorp, Geschichte der Mission — auf — St. Thomas, &c., Barby 1777, p. 318, *et seq.*; Comte, Cours de Philosophie positive, Vol. V.; Stuhr. Allg. Gesch. der Religionsformen, 2 vols. Berlin 1838, 8vo; Meiners, *ubi supra*, and the numerous

many forms of religious observances that prevailed widely in ancient days, and still continue among savage tribes. It belongs to a period in the progress of the individual, or society, when civilization is low, the manners wild and barbarous, and the intellect acts in ignorance of the causes at work around it; when man neither understands nature nor himself. Some writers suppose that the human race started at first with a pure Theism; for the knowledge of truth, say they, must be older than the perception of error, in this respect. It seems the sentiment of man would lead him to the ONE GOD. Doubtless it would, if the conditions of its action were perfectly fulfilled. But as this is not done in a state of ignorance and barbarism, therefore the religious sentiment mistakes its object, and sometimes worships the symbol more than the spirit it stands for.

In this form, not only the common objects above enumerated, but gems, metals, stones that fell from heaven,* images, carved bits of wood, stuffed skins of beasts, like the *medicine-bags* of the North-American Indians, are reckoned as divinities, and so become objects of adoration.† But in this case the visible object is idealized; not worshipped as the brute thing it really is, but as the type and symbol of God. Nature is an Apparition of the Deity, God in a mask. Brute matter was never an object of adoration. "Thus the Egyptians, who worshipped the Crocodile, did

accounts of the savage nations, by missionaries, travellers, &c.; Catlin, *ubi supra*, Vol. I. p. 35 *et seq.*, p. 88 *et seq.*, p. 156 *et seq.*, &c.

* These *Stone-fetiches* are called *Baetylia* by the learned. Cybele was worshipped in the form of a black stone, in Asia Minor. Theophrast. Charact. 16; Lucian Psudomant, § 30. The ancient Laplanders also worshipped large stones called *Seiteh*. See Scheffer's Lappland. In the time of Pausanias, at Phoræ, in Achaia, there were nearly thirty square stones, called by the names of the Gods, and worshipped. Lib. VII. ch. 22, ed. Lips. 1838. Vol. II. p. 618. Rough stones, he adds, formerly received divine honours universally in Greece.

† See Catlin, *ubi supra*. See also Legis Fundgruben des Alten Nordens, 2 vols. 8vo, Leip. 1829, and his Alkuna, Nordische und Nord-Slawische Mythologie, Vol. I. 8vo, Leip. 1831; Mone, Geschichte der Heidenthums in Nordlichen Europa, 2 vols. 8vo, Leip. 1822. See Grimm's Deutsche Mythologie, Gott. 1835, for this worship of nature in the North.

not worship it as a Crocodile, but as a symbol of God,—an appropriate one," says Plutarch, "for it alone of all animals has no tongue, and God needs none to speak his power and glory." Similar causes, it may be, led to the worship of other animals. Thus the Hawk was a type of divine foresight; the Bull, of strength; the Serpent, of mystery;—the Savage did not worship the Buffalo, but the Manitou of all Buffaloes, the universal cause of each particular effect. Still more, there is something mysterious about the animals. Their instinctive knowledge of coming storms, and other events; the wondrous foresight of the Beaver, the Bee; the sagacity of the Dog; the obscurity attending all their emotions,—helped, no doubt, to procure them a place among powers greater than human. It is the Unknown they worship in common things; at this stage, man, whose emotions are understood, is *never* an object of adoration.

Fetichism is the infancy of Religion.* Here the religious sentiment is still in the arms of rude, savage life: sensation prevails over reflection. It is a deification of nature: "All is God, but God himself." It loses the Infinite in the finite; worships the creature more than the Creator. Its lowest form—for in this lowest deep there is a lower deep—is the worship of beasts; the highest, the sublime but deceitful reverence which the old Sabean paid the host of Heaven, or which some Grecian or Indian philosopher offered to the Universe personifed, and called Pan, or Brahma. Then all the mass of created things was a Fetiche. God was worshipped in a sublime and devout, but bewildering Pantheism: He was not considered as distinct from the Universe. Pantheism and Fetichism are nearly allied.†

* Some writers have supposed there was a state anterior to the fetichistic, in which man had no religious ideas or emotions whatever. But the supposition is not only gratuitous, but unphilosophical also, for man being always the same, his essential wants are likewise the same, and differ only in the degree of their development.

† In consequence of the opinion in fetichistic nations, that external things have a

In the lowest form of this worship, so far as we can gather from the savage tribes, each individual has his own peculiar fetiche—a beast, an image, a stone, a mountain, or a star, a concrete and visible type of God! For it seems, in this state, that all or most external things are supposed to have a life analogous in kind to ours, but more or less intense in degree. The concrete form is but the veil of God, like that before Isis in Egypt. There are no priests, for each man has access to his own deity at will. Worship and prayer are personal, and without mediators. The age of the priesthood, as a distinct class, has not come. Worship is entirely free; there is no rite, established and fixed. Theological doctrines are not yet formed. There are no mysteries in which each may not share.

This state of Fetichism continues as long as man is in the gross state of ignorance which renders it possible. Next, as the power of abstraction and generalization becomes enlarged, and the qualities of external nature are understood, there are concrete and visible Gods for the *family;* next for the *tribe;* then for the *nation.* But their power is supposed to be limited within certain bounds. A subsequent generalization gives an invisible but still concrete Deity for each department of nature—the earth, the sea, the sky.

Now as soon as there is a Fetiche for the family, or the tribe, a mediator becomes needed to interpret the will, and ensure the favour of that fetiche—to bring rain, or plenty, or success, and to avert impending evils. Such are the *angekoks* of the Esquimaux, the *medicine-men* of the Mandans, the *jugglers* of the negroes. Then a priesthood gradually springs up; at first possessing none but spiritual powers; at length it surrounds its God with mysteries; excludes

mysterious life, M. Comte, Cours de Philosophie positive, Paris 1830–41, Vol. V. p. 36, *et seq.*, *discovers traces of it in animals.* When a savage, a child, or a dog, first hears a watch tick, each supposes it endowed with life, "whence results, by natural *consequence*, a Fetichism, which, at bottom, is common to all three!" Here he confounds the *sign* with the *cause.*

him from the public eye; establishes forms, sacrifices, and doctrines; limits access to the Gods; becomes tyrannical; aspires after political power, and founds a theocracy—the worst of despotisms, the earliest, and the most lasting.* Still it has occupied a vast and indispensable position in the development of the human race.

The highest form of Fetichism is the worship of the stars, or of the universe. Here it easily branches off into Polytheism. Indeed it is impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends, for traces of each are found in all the others. The GREAT SPIRIT is worshipped, perhaps, in all stages of Fetichism: the Fetiche and the Manitou, visible types, are not the Great Spirit. But even in the worship of many Gods, or of ONE alone, traces of the ruder form still linger. The individual fetiche is preserved in the Amulet, worn as a charm; in the figure of an animal painted on the dress, the armour, or the flesh of the worshipper. The *family* fetiche survives in the household Gods—the Penates of the Romans, the Teraphim of Laban, the Idol of Micah. The fetiche of the *tribe* still lives in the Lares of the Roman; the patron God of each Grecian people; in some animal treated with great respect, or idealized in art, as the Bull Apis, the brazen Serpent, Horses consecrated to the Sun in Solomon's Temple;† in an image of the Deity, like the old wooden statues of Minerva, always religiously kept, or the magnificent figures of the Gods in marble, ivory, or gold, the productions of maturest art; in some chosen

* See at the end of Hodges' "Elihu," &c., London 1750, 1 vol. 4to, a striking account of the manner in which religious forms are established, taken from a French publication which was burned by the common hangman at Paris. See also, on the establishment and influence of the priesthood upon Religion, Constant, *ubi supra*, Vol. II. Liv. III. IV.; Vol. IV. *passim*. His judgment of the Priesthood, though often just, is sometimes too severe. Comte, *ubi supra*, Vol. V. p. 57, *et seq.* On the Priesthood among savage nations, see Pritchard, *ubi supra*, Vol. I. p. 206, *et seq.*; Meiners, *ubi supra*, Vol. II. p. 481–602.

† Vatke, Biblische Theologie, Vol. I., 1835, attempts to trace out the connection of Fetichism with the Jewish ritual, but sometimes sees Fetichism, where nothing but prejudice could discover it, perhaps.

symbol—the Palladium, the Ancilia, the Ark of the Covenant. The fetiche of the *nation*, almost inseparably connected with the former, is still remembered in the mystical cherubim, and most holy place among the Jews; in the Olympian Jove of Greece, and the Capitoline Jupiter of Rome; in the Image of the "Great Goddess Diana, which fell down from Jupiter." It appears also in reverence for particular places formerly deemed the local and exclusive residence of the fetiche,—such as the Caaba at Mecca; Hebron, Moriah, and Bethel in Judea; Delphi in Greece, and the great gathering places of the North-men in Europe;—spots deemed holy by the superstitious even now, and therefore made the site of Christian Churches.*

Other and more general vestiges of Fetichism remain in the popular superstitions; in the belief of signs, omens, auguries, divination by the flight of birds, and other accidental occurrences; in the notion that unusual events, thunder and earthquakes and pestilence, are peculiar manifestations of God; that he is more specially present in a certain place, as a Church, or time, as the Sabbath, or the hour of death; is pleased with actions not natural, sacrifices, fasts, penance, and the like.† Perhaps no form of Religion has yet been adopted, which has not the stain of Fetichism upon it. The popular Christian theology is full of it. The names of the constellations are records of Fetichism that will long endure.‡

Under this form Religion has the smallest sound influence upon life. The religious affords but little aid to the moral element. The supposed demands of Religion seem capricious to the last degree, unnatural and absurd. The im-

* See Mone, *ubi supra*, Vol. I. p. 23 *et seq.*, p. 43 *et seq.*, p. 113 *et seq.*, p. 249 *et seq.*, and elsewhere.

† The great religious festivals of the Christians, Yule and Easter, are easily traced back to such an occasion, at least to analogous festivals of fetichistic or polytheistic people. The festival of John the Baptist must be put in the same class. See some details on this subject in a very poor book of Nork's, Der Mystagog, &c.

‡ See Creutzer, Symbolik und Mythologie, 3d ed. Vol. I. p. 30, *et seq.*

perfect priesthood of necromancers and jugglers,—which belong to this period,—enhances the evil by multiplying rites, encouraging asceticism, laying heavy burthens upon the people—demanding odious mutilations and horrible sacrifices, often of human victims, in the name of God—and in helping to keep Religion in its infant state, by prohibiting the secular eye to look upon its mysterious jugglery, and forbidding the bans between Faith and Knowledge. Still this class, devoted to speculation and study, does great immediate service to the race by promoting science and art, and indirectly and against its will contributes to overturn the form it designs to support. The priesthood comes unavoidably.*

In a low form of Fetichism, a law of nature seems scarcely ever recognised. All things have a life of their own; all phenomena, growth, decay, and reproduction; the seasons of the year, the changes in the sky, and similar things, depend on the caprice of the Deities: the jugglers can make it rain; a witch can split the moon; a magician heal the sick. Law is resolved into miracle: the most cunning men, who understand the laws of nature better than others, are miracle-workers, magicians, priests, necromancers, astrologers, soothsayers, physicians, general mediators and interpreters of the Gods; as the Mandans called them, "great medicine-men."†

Then as men experience both joy and grief, pain and pleasure, and as they are too rude in thought to see that both are but different phases of the same thing, and affliction is but success in a mask, it is supposed they cannot be the work of the same Divinity. Hence comes the wide

* See the remarks of Lafitau, Mœurs des Sauvages Ameriquains, &c., 2 vols. 4to, Paris 1734, Vol. I. p. 108–456. His work is amazingly superficial, but contains now and then a good thing.

† Mr. Catlin, *ubi supra*, relates anecdotes that illustrate the state of thought and feeling in the state of Fetichism. Much also may be found in Marco Polo's Travels in the Eastern parts of the World, London 1818, and in Marsden's Notes to that edition. The Early Voyagers, likewise, are full of facts that belong here.

division into good and evil Gods,—a distinction found in all religions, and carefully preserved in the theological doctrines of the Christian church. Worship is paid both to the good and evil deity. A sacrifice is offered to avert the wrath of the one, and secure the favour of the other. The sacrifice corresponds to the character ascribed to the Deity, and this depends again on the national and personal character of the devotee.*

Now in that stage of civilization where every man has his own personal deity, and no two perhaps the same, the bond that unites man to man is exceedingly slight;—each man's hand is, in some measure, against his brother's. Opposition, or unlikeness among the gods, leads to hostility among men. Thus family is arrayed against family, tribe against tribe, nation against nation, because the peculiar God of the one family, tribe, or nation, is deemed hostile to all others. Therefore, among cruel nations, whose Gods of course are conceived of as cruel, the most acceptable sacrifice to the Fetiche is the blood of his enemies. A stranger whom accident or design brings to the devotee is a choice offering. The Saint is a murderer. War is a constant and normal state of man, not an exception as it afterwards becomes; the captives are sacrificed as a matter of course. The energies of the race are devoted to destruction, not to creative industry. It is the business of a *man* to war—of a *woman* to till the soil. The fancied God guides the deepening battle, presides over the butchery, and canonizes the bloody hand. He is the God of Battles, teaches men to war, inspires them to fight.

* The worship of *evil beings* is a curious phenomenon in human history. The literature of the subject is copious and instructive. Some famous men think the existence of the Devil cannot be found out by the light of Nature and unaided Reason; others make it a doctrine of *natural* religion. Some think him incapable of Atheism, though only a *speculative Theist*. The doctrine is a disgrace to the Christian Church, and well fitted to excite the disgust of thinking and pious men. But see what may be said for the doctrine by Mayer, Historia Diaboli, 2d edition, 1780. See the literature in Wegscheider, Institutiones, § 104–5.

It is, unfortunately, but too easy to find historical verifications of this phase of human nature. The Jews, in their early and remarkable passage from Fetichism to Polytheism and Monotheism—if we may trust the tale—resolve to exterminate all the Canaanites, millions of men, unoffending and peaceful, because the two nations worshipped different Gods, and Jehovah, the peculiar deity of the Jews, a jealous God, demanded the destruction of the other nation, who did not worship him. Men, women, and children must be slain.* The Spaniards found the same custom prevailing at Mexico, and elsewhere. In our day it still continues in the South-Sea Islands, under forms horrible almost as of old in the Holy Land.†

But the intense demands war makes on all the energies of man, help to unfold the thinking faculty, to elevate the race, and thus indirectly to promote truer notions of Religion. Thus war, cruel and hideous monster as he is, has yet rocked Art and Science in his bloody arms. God makes the wrath of man to praise him;

> "From seeming evil still educing good,
> And better still, and better thence again,
> In infinite progression."

As civilization goes forward in this rough way, the voice of humanity begins to speak more loudly; Morality is wedded to Religion, and a new progeny is born to bless the world. It begins to be felt, that if the captive consents to serve his conqueror's God, the service will be more acceptable than his death. Hence he is spared; still worships his own Deity perhaps, but confesses the superiority of the victorious God.

* Human sacrifice prevailed in many parts of America when first discovered by the Christians, who continued it in a different form, not offering to God but Mammon. See Bancroft, History of the United States, Vol. III. p. 296-7, for some forms of this. The whole of Chap. XXII. is replete with philosophical and historical instruction, and one of the most valuable and brilliant even in *that* series of shining pages.

† On this passage in human history, see Comte, Vol. V. p. 90 *et seq.*, p. 132 *et seq.*, and p. 186 *et seq.*

The God of the conquered party becomes a Devil, or a strange God, or a servant of the controlling Deity. Thus the Gibeonites and the Helots, who once would have been sacrificed to the conquering God, become hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Hebrews and the Spartans, and serve to develope the directly useful and creative faculties of man: the Gods demand the service, not the life-blood of the stranger and captive. No doubt the anointed priesthood opposed this refinement with a "Thus saith the Lord," and condemned such as received the blessing of men ready to perish. But it would not do. Samuel hews Agag in pieces, though Saul would have saved him; but the days of Samuel also are numbered, and the theocratic power pales its ineffectual ray before a rising light.

II. POLYTHEISM is the next stage in the religious development of mankind. Here reflection begins to predominate over sensation. As the Laws of Nature, the habits and organization of animals, begin to be understood, they cease to represent the true object of worship: no man ever deified Weight and Solidity. But as men change slowly from form to form, and more slowly still from the form to the substance, coarse and material Fetichism must be idealized before it could pass away. No doubt men, for the sake of example, bowed to the old stock and stone when they knew an idol was nothing. It might offend the weak to give up the lie all at once.

Polytheism is the worship of many Gods without the worship of animals. It may be referred to two sources—worship of the Powers of *material* nature, and of the Powers of *spiritual* nature. Its history is that of a conflict between the two.* In the earliest epoch of Greek Polytheism, the

* In what relates to this subject, I shall consider Polytheism as it appeared to the great mass of its votaries. Its most obvious phenomena are the most valuable. Some, as Bryant, take the speculations of naturalists, and make it only a system of Physics; others, as Cudworth, following the refinements of later philosophers,

former prevails; the latter at a subsequent period. The early deities are children of the Earth, the Sky, the Ocean. These objects themselves are Gods.* In a word, the Saturnian Gods of the older mythology are deified powers of nature; but in the mythology of the later philosophers, it is absolute spiritual power that rules the world from the top of Olympus, and the subordinate deities are the spiritual faculties of man personified and embellished.† Matter, no longer worshipped, is passive, powerless, and dishonoured;—the animals are driven off from Olympus. Man is idealized and worshipped;—the Supreme wears the personality of men. Anthropomorphism takes the place of a deification of nature: the popular Gods are of the same origin as their worshippers—born, nursed, bred, but immortal, and not growing old;‡—they are married like men and women, and become parents. They preside over each department of nature, and each province of art:§ Pluto rules over the abodes of the departed; Neptune over the ocean; Jove over the land and sky. One Divinity wakes the olive and the corn; another has charge of the vine. One guides the day from his chariot with golden wheels; a sister deity walks in brightness through the nocturnal sky. A fountain in the shade, a brook leaping adown the hills, or curling through the

would prove it to be a system of Monotheism in disguise. But to the mass, Apollo was not the Sun, nor the Beautiful influence of God, whatsoever he might appear to the mystic sage.

* Julius Firmicus maintains that the heathen deities were simply deified natural objects; De Errore Prof. Religionarum, ch. i.–v. But Clement of Alexandria more wisely refers them to seven distinct sources; Cohortatio ad Gentes, Opp. I., ed. Potter, pp. 21, 22. Earth and Heaven are the oldest Gods of Greece.

† See, for example, the contest of Eros and Anacreon, Carm. XIV. p. 18, 19, ed. Möbius.

‡ See Heyne, Excursus VIII. in Iliad, I. 494, p. 189; Hegel, Philosophie der Rel. Vol. II. p. 96–141; Pindar, Nem. VI. 1, *et seq.*; Olymp. XII. 7, *et seq.*, &c.

§ See Aristotle, Metaphysica, Lib. XI. § 8, Opp. VIII. p. 233, *et seq.*, ed. Bekker, Oxford 1837. In the old Pelasgic Polytheism, it seems there were no proper names for the individual Gods; the general term *Gods* was all. Herodotus, Lib. II. ch. 52, Opp. I. p. 606, *et seq.*, ed. Baehr. Plato mentions the two classes of Gods, one derived from the *worship of nature*, the other from that of *man*; Legg. Lib. XI. Opp. VIII. p. 344, ed. Ast. See Plutarch, cited in Eusebius, P. E. III. 1, p. 57, ed. 1579.

plains; a mountain walled with savage rocks; a sequestered vale fringed with romantic trees,—each was the residence of a God. Demons dwelt in dark caves, and shook the woods at night with hideous rout, breaking even the cedars. They sat on the rocks—fair virgins above the water, but hideous shapes below—to decoy sailors to their destruction. The mysterious sounds of nature, the religious music of the wind playing among the pines at eventide, or stirring the hot palm-tree at noonday, was the melody of the God of sounds.* A beautiful form of man or woman was a shrine of God.† The storms had a deity. Witches rode the rack of night. A God offended roused nations to war, or drove Ulysses over many lands. A pestilence, drought, famine, inundation, an army of locusts, was the special work of a God.‡ No Ship is called by the name of Glaucus, because he offended a deity.§

* See the beautiful lines of Wordsworth, Excursion, Boston edition, 1824, Book IV. p. 159, *et seq.* See also Creutzer's Symbolik und Mythologie, third edition, Vol. I. p. 8–29.

† See Herodotus, V. 47. The Greeks erected an altar on the grave of Philippos, the most beautiful of the Greeks, and offered sacrifice. See Wachsmuth, Antiquities of Greece, Vol. II. 2, p. 315, on the general adoration of Beauty with the Greeks. Hegel calls this worship the *Religion of Beauty.* Phil. der Religion, Vol. II. p. 96, *et seq.* National character marks the religious form.

‡ A *disease* was sometimes personified and worshipped, as Fever at Rome. See Ælian, Var. Hist. XII. 11, p. 734, *et seq.*, ed. Gronovius; Valerius Maximus, XX. Lib. II. ch. v. 6, Vol. I. p. 126, *et seq.*, ed. Hase. Temples were erected to *Shame* and *Impudence*, *Fear*, *Death*, *Laughter*, and *Gluttony*, among the Heathens, as shrines to the Saints among Christians. Pausanias, Lib. IV. ch. xvii., says, the Athenians had a Temple for Mercy. See, however, the ingenious remarks of M. Cousin, Journal des Savans, March 1835, p. 136, *et seq.*, and Creutzer's animadversions thereon, *ubi sup.* Vol. I. p. 135–6. In India, each natural object is the seat of a God. But in Greece, the worship of nature passed into the higher form. See some curious remarks of Hermann on the most ancient mythology of the Greeks, in his Opuscula, Vol. II. p. 167. It is a noticeable fact, that some of the old polytheistic theogonies spoke of a *gradual and progressive development of the Gods*; the *creator* keeps even pace with the *creation.* The explanation of a fact so singular as the self-contradictory opinion that the Infinite is not always the same, may be found in the history of *human conceptions* of God, for these are necessarily progressive. See Aristotle, Metaphysica, IV. p. 1091, *et seq.*, and Hesiod's Theogony everywhere, and note the *progress of the divine species* from Chaos and Earth, to the moral divinities, Eunomia, Dike, Eirene, &c. In some of the Oriental theogonies, the rule was inverted; the first *emanation* was the best.

§ Herodotus, Lib. VI. 86, relates the beautiful story of Glaucus, so full of moral

Arts also have their patron divinity. Phœbus-Apollo inspires the Poet and Artist; the Muses—Daughters of Memory and Jove—fire the bosom from their golden urn of truth;* Thor, Ares, Mars, have power in war; a sober virgin-goddess directs the useful arts of life; a deity presides over agriculture, the labours of the smith, the shepherd, the weaver, and each art in life. He defends men engaged in these concerns. Every nation, city, or family, has its favourite God,—a Zeus, Athena, Juno, Odin, Baal, Jehovah, Osiris, or Melkartha, who is supposed to be partial to the nation which is his "chosen people." Now perhaps no nation ever believed in many separate, *independent*, absolute deities. All the Gods are not of equal might. One is King of all, the God of Gods, who holds the others with an iron sway. Sometimes he is the All-Father; sometimes the All-Fate, which, in some ages, seems to be made a substitute for the one true God.† Each nation trusts that its own chief God is greater than the Gods of all other nations; or, in time of war, seeks to seduce the hostile Gods by sacrifice, promise of temples and ceremonies, a pilgrimage or a vow. Thus the Romans invoked the Gods of their enemy to come out of the beleagured city, and join with them, the conquerors of the world. The Gods were to be had at a bargain. Jacob drives a trade with Elohim; the God receives a *human* service as adequate return for his own *divine* service.‡ The promise of each is only "for value received."

truth. Compare with it, Zechariah v. 3–4, Job xv. 20, *et seq.*, xviii. *et seq.*, where the same beautiful and natural sentiment appears.

* See the strange pantheistic account of the origin and history of Gods and all things in the Orphic poems and Mythology. These have been collected and treated of with great discrimination by Lobeck, Aglaophamus, Vol. I. p. 473, *et seq.* See the more summary account in Brandis, Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I. p. 60, *et seq.*

† Men must believe in somewhat that is Absolute: if their conception of the Deity be imperfect, they unavoidably retreat to a somewhat superior to the Deity. Thus for every defect in the popular conception of Zeus, some new power is added to Fate. "It is impossible even for God to escape Fate," said Herodotus. See also Cudworth, Ch. I. § 1–3.

‡ Genesis xxviii. 10–12.

In this stage of religious development each Deity does not answer to the Idea of God as mentioned above; it is not the Being of infinite power, wisdom, and love. Neither the Zeus of the Iliad, nor the Elohim of Genesis, nor the Jupiter of the Pharsalia, nor even the Jehovah of the Jewish Prophets, is always this: a transient and complex conception takes the place of the eternal Idea of God. Hence his limitations; those of a man. Jehovah is narrow, Zeus is licentious, Hermes will lie and steal, Juno is a shrew.

The Gods of polytheistic nations are in part deified men.* The actions of many men, of different ages and countries, are united into one man's achievement, and we have a Hercules or an Apollo, a thrice-great Hermes, a Jupiter or an Odin. The inventors of useful arts, as agriculture, navigation—of the plough, the loom, laws, fire, and letters—subsequently became Gods. Great men, wise men, good men, were honoured while living; they are deified when they decease: as they judged or governed the living once, so now the dead. Their actions are idealized; the good lives after them—their faults are buried: statues, altars, temples, are erected to them. He who was first honoured as a man, is now worshipped as a God.† To these personal deities are added the attributes of the old Fetiches, and still more the powers of nature. The attributes of the moon, the sun, the lightning, the ocean, or the stars, are transformed to a personal being, conceived as a man. To be made strong, he is made monstrous, with many hands or heads. In a polytheistic nation, if we trace the history of the popular conception of any God—that of Zeus among

* Tertullian De Anima, ch. 33. See Meiners, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. p. 290, *et seq.*; Pindar, Olymp. II. 68, *et seq.*, ed. Dissen, and his remarks, Vol. II. p. 36, *et seq.* This Anthropomorphism took various forms in Greece, Egypt, and India. In the former it was the *elevation of a man to the Gods;* in the latter, *the descent of a God to man.* This feature of Oriental worship furnishes a fruitful hint as to the origin of the doctrine of *the Incarnation*, and its value. The doctrine of some Christians unites the two, in the *God-man.*

† See the origin of Idolatry laid down in Wisdom of Solomon, ch. xiv. 17–19. Warburton, Divine Legation, Book V. § II. [III.]

the Grecians, for example—we see a gradual advance, till their highest God becomes the Absolute. Then the others are insignificant—merely his servants, like colonels and corporals in an army; are parts of his state machinery. The passage to Monotheism is then easy.* The spiritual leaders of every nation,—obedient souls, into whom the spirit enters and makes them Sons of God and prophets,—see the meaning which the popular notion hides; they expose what is false, proclaim the eternal truth, and as their recompense are stoned, exiled, or slain. But the march of mankind is over the tombs of the prophets: the world is saved only by crucified redeemers. The truth is not silenced with Aristotle, nor exiled with Anaxagoras; nor slain with Socrates: it enters the soul of its veriest foes, and their children build up the monuments of the murdered Seer.

We cannot enter into the feelings of a polytheist, nor see how morality was fostered by his religion: ours would be a similar puzzle to him. But Polytheism has played a great part in the development of mankind—yes, in the development of morality and Religion.† Its aim was to "raise a mortal to the skies,"—to infinitize the finite,—to bridge over the great gulf between man and God. Let us look briefly at some of its features.

I. In Polytheism we find a regular priesthood. This is sometimes exclusive and hereditary, as in Egypt and India, where it establishes castes, and founds a theocracy; sometimes not hereditary, but open, free, as in Greece.‡ When

* There are two strongly-marked tendencies in all polytheistic religions—one towards pure Monotheism, the other to Pantheism. See an expression of the latter in Orpheus, ed. Hermann, p. 457—"Zeus is the first, Zeus the last," &c. &c., cited also in Cudworth, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. p. 404. See Zeno, in Diogenes Laertius, ed. Hübner. Lib. vii. ch. 73, Vol. II. p. 186, *et seq.*; Clemens Alexand. Stromat. VII. 12. See also Cudworth, ch. iv. § 17, *et seq.*, and Mosheim's Annotations.

† M. Comte thinks this the period of the greatest religious activity! The *facts* look the other way.

‡ Even in Greece, some sacerdotal functions vested by descent in certain families: for example, in the Iambides, Branchides, Eumolpides, Asclepiades, Cerycides, Cli-

"every clove of garlic is a God," as in Fetichism, each man is his own priest. But when a troop of Fetiches are condensed into a single God, and he is invisible, all cannot have equal access to him; for he is not infinite, but partial—chooses his own place and time. Some mediator, therefore, must stand between the God and common men.* This was the function of the priest. Perhaps his office became hereditary at a very early period; for as we trace backward the progress of mankind, the law of inheritance has a wider range. The priesthood, separated from the actual cares of war, and of providing food—the two sole departments of human activity in a barbarous age—have leisure to study the will of the Gods. Hence arises a learned class, who gradually foster the higher concerns of mankind. The effort to learn the will of the Gods leads to the study of nature, and therefore to Science. The attempt to please them by images, ceremonies, and the like, leads to architecture, statues, music, poetry and hymns—to the elegant arts. The priesthood fostered all these. It took different forms to suit the genius of different nations; established castes, and founded the most odious despotism in Egypt and the East, and perhaps the North; but in Greece left public opinion comparatively free. In the one, change of opinion was violent, and caused commotion, as the fabled Giant buried under Ætna shakes the island when he turns; in the other it was natural—easy as for Endymion to turn the other cheek to the Moon. Taken in the whole, it has been a heavy rider on the neck of the nations. Its virtue has been, in a rude age, to promote Science, Art, Patriotism, Piety to the Gods, and, in a certain fashion, love to man. But its vice has

tiades. See them in Wachsmuth, Vol. I. P. I. p. 152. See Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, ch. v.; Meiners, Vol. II. Book XII.

* See Montesquieu, Esprit des Lois, XXV. ch. iv. See Priestley's Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos, &c., Northumberland, 1799, § 10, for the esteem in which the sacerdotal class was held in India; also Von Bohlen, Das alte Indien, Vol. I. p. 45, *et seq.*; Vol. II. p. 12, *et seq.*

been to grasp at the throat of mankind, to control their thoughts and govern their life, aspiring to be the Will of the World. When it has been free, as in Greece, its influence has been deep, silent, and unseen—blessed and beautiful. But when it is hereditary and exclusive, it preserves the form, ritual, and creed of barbarous times, in the midst of civilization; separates morality from religion, life from belief, good sense from theology; demands horrible sacrifices of the body, or the soul; and, like the angry God in the old Pelasgic fable, chains for eternal damnation the bold free spirit which, learning the riddle of the world, brings down the fire of Heaven to bless poor mortal men. It were useless to quote examples of this influence of the priesthood; —it has been the burthen of Fate upon the human race. Each age has its Levites; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. In many nations their story is a tale of blood—the tragedy of Sin and Woe.*

II. In the polytheistic period, war is a normal state, and almost constant. Religion then unites men of the same tribe and nation, but severs one people from another. The Gods are hostile; Jehovah and Baal cannot agree: their worshippers must bite and devour one another. Strangers are sacrificed in Tauris and Egypt, and the captives in war put to death at the command of the Priest. But war at that period has also a civilizing influence: it was to the ancient world what Trade is to modern times—another form of the same selfishness; it was the chief method of extending a nation's influence. The remnant of the conquered nation was added to the victorious empire, became its slaves, or tributaries, and at last shared its civilization, adding the sum of its own excellence to the moral treasury of its mas-

* See the one-sided view of Constant, which pervades his entire work on Religion. See his Essay on the "Progressive Development of Religious Ideas," in Ripley's Philosophical Miscellanies, Vol. II. p. 292, *et seq.* Virgil, in his description of the Elysian Fields, assigns the first place to *Legislators*, the magnanimous Heroes who civilized mankind; the next to *Patriots*; and the third to *Priests*. Æn. VI. 661, *et seq.*

ter. Conquered Greece gave Arts and Philosophy to Rome; the exiled Jews brought back from Babylon the great doctrine of eternal life. The Goths conquered Rome; but Roman Christianity subdues the Goths. Religion, allied with the fiercest animal passions, demanded war; this led to science. It was soon seen that one head which thinks is worth a hundred hands. Science elevates the mass of men; they perceive the folly of bloodshed, and its sin. Thus War, by a fatal necessity, digs its own grave. The art of production surpasses the art to destroy.*

All the wars of polytheistic nations have more or less a religious character. Their religion, however, favoured less the extermination of enemies than their subjugation;—while Monotheism—denying the existence of all deities but one—when it is superinduced upon a nation in a rude state—like Fetichism itself, butchers its captives, as the Jews, the Mahometans, and the Christians, have often done—a sacrifice to the blood-thirsty phantom they call a God. In the ruder stages of Polytheism, war is the principal occupation of man. The Military and the Priestly powers, strength of Body and strength of Thought, are the two Scales of Society. Science and Art are chiefly devoted to kill men and honour the Gods. The same weapons which conquer the spoil, sacrifice it to the Deity.†

III. But as polytheism leads men to spare the life of the captive, so it leads to a demand for his service. Slavery, therefore, like war, comes unavoidably from this form of Religion, and the social system which grows out of it. At this day, under the influence of Monotheism, we are filled with deep horror at the thought of a man invading the

* M. Montgery, a French Captain, touchingly complains "that the art to destroy, though the easiest of all from its very nature, is now much less advanced than the art of production, in spite of the superior difficulty of the latter." Quoted in Comte, *ubi supra*, Vol. V. p. 167.

† M. Comte, Vol. V. p. 165, *et seq.*, has some valuable remarks on this stage of human civilization. See also Vico, Nuova Scienza, Bib. II. cap. i–iv.

personality of a man, to make him a thing—a slave: the flesh of a Christian creeps at the thought of it. But yet slavery was an indispensable adjunct of this rough form of society. Between that Fetichism which bade a man slay his captive, eating his body and drinking his blood as indispensable elements of his communion with God, and that Polytheism which only makes him a slave, there is a great gulf which it required long centuries to fill up and pass over. Anger has given place to Interest—perhaps to Mercy. Without this change, with the advance of the art to destroy, the human race must have perished. By means of slavery the art of production was advanced; the Gibeonite and the Helot must work and not fight. Thus by forced labour, the repugnance against work, which is so powerful among the barbarous and half-civilized, is overcome; systematic industry is developed; the human race is helped forward in this mysterious way. Both the theocratic and the military caste demanded a servile class, inseparable from the spirit of barbarism, and the worship of many Gods; which falls as that spirit dies out, and the recognition of one God, Father of all, drives selfishness out of the heart. In an age of Polytheism, Slavery and War were in harmony with the institutions of society and the spirit of the age. Murder and Cannibalism, two other shoots from the same stock, had enjoyed their day. All are revolting to the spirit of Monotheism—at variance with its idea of life—uncertain and dangerous—monstrous anomalies full of deadly peril. The Priesthood of Polytheism, like all castes based on a lie, upheld the system of slavery, which rested on the same foundation with itself. The slavery of sacerdotal governments is more oppressive and degrading than that of a military despotism: it binds the Soul—makes distinctions in the *nature* of man. The Prophet would free men; but the Priest enslaves. As Polytheism does its work, and man developes his nature higher than the selfish, the condition of the slave is made better. It becomes a religious duty to free the bondsmen

at their master's death, as formerly the priests had burned them on his funeral pile, or buried them alive in his tomb, to attend him in the realm of shades.* Just as civilization advanced, and the form of Religion therewith, it was found difficult to preserve the institution of ancient crime, which Sensuality and Sin clung to and embraced.†

IV. Another striking feature of polytheistic influence was the union of power over the Body with power over the Soul—the divine right to prescribe actions and prohibit thoughts. This is the fundamental principle of all theocracies. The Priests were the speculative class; their superior knowledge was natural power;—superstition in the people and selfishness in the Priest converted that power into despotic tyranny. The military were the active caste; superior strength and skill gave them also a natural power. But he who alone in an age of barbarism can foretell an eclipse, or poison a flock of sheep, can subdue an army by these means. At an early stage of polytheism, we find the political subject to the priestly power. The latter holds

* See, who will, the mingling of profound and superficial remarks on this subject in Montesquieu, *ubi supra*, Liv. XV.; Grotius, De Jure Belli ac Pacis, Lib. III. ch. vii.–viii.; Selden, De Jure Naturali, &c., ed. 1680, Lib. I. ch. v. p. 174, and Lib. VII. VIII. XII. *et al.* We need only compare the popular opinion respecting slavery among the Jews, with that of the Greeks or Romans in their best days, to see the influence of Monotheism and Polytheism in regard to this subject. See some remarks on the Jewish slavery in Michaelis's Laws of Moses. Slavery in the East has in general been of a much milder character than in any other portion of the world. Wolf somewhere says the Greeks received this relic of barbarism from the Asiatics. If so, they made the evil institution worse than they found it. According to Burckhardt, it exists in a very mild form among the Mahometans, everywhere. Of course his remarks do not apply to the Turks, the most cruel of Mussulmen. No code of *ancient* laws (to say nothing of modern legislation) was so humane as the Jewish in this respect.

† See Comte, *ubi supra*, Vol. V. p. 186, *et seq.* On the subject of slavery in Polytheistic nations, see Gibbon, Decline and Fall, ed. Paris 1840, Vol. I. ch. ii. p. 37, *et seq.*, and the valuable notes of Milman and Guizot. For the influence of Monotheism on this frightful evil, compare Schlosser, Geschichte der Alten Welt. Vol. III. Part III. ch. ix. § 2, *et al.*; in particular the story of Paulinus, and Deo Gratias, p. 284 *et seq.*, and p. 334 *et seq.*, p. 427 *et seq.*; and compare it with the conduct of Cato, as given by Plutarch, Life of Cato the Censor; and Schlosser, *ubi supra*, Vol. II. Part II. p. 189, *et seq.*

communion with the Gods, whom none dare disobey. Romulus, Æacus, Minos, Moses, receive their laws from God. To disobey them, therefore, is to incur the wrath of the powers that hold the thunder and lightning. Thus manners and laws, opinions and actions, are subject to the same external authority. The theocratic governor controls the conscience and the passions of the people. Thus the radical evil, arising from the confusion between the Priests of different Gods, was partially removed, for the spiritual and temporal power was lodged in the same hand.

In some nations the Priesthood was inferior to the political power, as in Greece. Here the sacerdotal class held an inferior rank, from Homer's time to that of Laertius;—the Genius of the nation demanded it. Accordingly there sprang up a body of men, neither political, sacerdotal, nor military—the philosophers.* They could have found no place in any theocratic government but have done the world great religious service, building "wiser than they knew." It was comparatively easy for Art, Science, and all the great works of man, to go forward under such circumstances. Hence comes that wonderful development of mind in the country of Homer, Socrates, and Phidias. But in countries where the temporal was subject to the spiritual power, the reverse followed; there was no change without a revolution. The character of the nation becomes monotonous; science, literature, morals, cease to improve. When the nation goes down, it "falls like Lucifer, never to rise again." The story of Samuel affords us an instance, among the Jews, of the sacerdotal class resisting, and successfully, the attempt to take away its power. Here the Priest, finding there must be a King, succeeded at length in placing on the throne a "man after God's own heart," that is, one who would sacri-

* Perhaps none of the polytheistic nations offers an instance of the spiritual and temporal power existing in separate hands, when one party was entirely independent of the other. The separation of the two was reserved for a different age, and will be treated of in its place.

fice as the Priest allowed. The effort to separate the temporal from the spiritual power, to disenthral mankind from the tyranny of sacerdotal corporations, is one of the great battles for the souls of the world. It begins early, and continues long. The contest shakes the earth in its time.

V. Another trait of the polytheistic period is the deification of men.* Fetichism makes gods of cattle—Polytheism of men. This exaltation of men exerted great influence in the early stage of polytheism, when it was a real belief of the people and the priest, and not a verbal form, as in the decline of the old worship. Stout hearts could look forward to a wider sphere in the untrod world of spirit, where they could wield the sceptre of command, and sit down with the immortal Gods, renewed in never-ending youth. The examples of Æacus, Minos, Rhadamanthus, of Bacchus and Hercules—mortals promoted to the Godhead by merit and not birth — crowned the ambition of the aspiring. The kindred belief that the soul, dislodged from its "fleshly nook," still had an influence on the affairs of men, and came, a guardian spirit, to bless mankind, was a powerful auxiliary in a rude state of religious growth—a notion which has not yet faded out of the civilized world.† This worship seems unaccountable in our times: but when these men were supposed to be descendants of the Gods, or born miraculously, and sustained by superhuman power; or mediators between these and the human race; when it was believed that they in life had possessed celestial powers, or were incarnations of

* See Farmer on the Worship of Human Spirits, London 1783. Plutarch (Isis and Osiris) denies that human spirits were ever worshipped; but he is opposed by notorious facts. See Creutzer, *ubi supra*, p. 137, *et seq.* The deification of human beings of course implied a belief in the immortality of the human soul, and is one of the many standing proofs of that belief. See Heyne's remarks on Iliad, XXIII. 64 and 104, Vol. VIII. p. 368, 378, *et seq.*

† The Christians began at an early age to imitate this, as well as other parts of the old polytheistic system. Eusebius, P. E. XIII. 11; Augustine, De Civitate Dei, VIII. 27.

some deity or heavenly spirit, the transition to their Apotheosis is less violent and absurd; it follows as a natural result. The divine being is more glorious when he has shaken off the robe of flesh.* Certain it is, this belief was clung to with astonishing tenacity, and, under several forms, still retains its place in the Christian church.†

The moral effect of Polytheism, on the whole, is difficult to understand. However, it is safe to say it is greater than that of Fetichism. The constant evil of war in public, and slavery in private; the arbitrary character assigned to the Gods; the influence of the priesthood, laying more stress on the ritual and the creed than on the life; the exceeding outwardness of many popular forms of worship; the constant separation made between Religion and Morality; the indifference of the priesthood in Greece, their despotism in India,—do not offer a very favourable picture of the influence of Polytheism in producing a beautiful life. Yet, on the other hand, the high tone of morality which pervades the literature of Greece, the reverential piety displayed by poets and philosophers, and still more the undeniable fact of characters in her story, rarely surpassed in nobleness of aim and loftiness of attainment,—these things lead to the opinion that the moral influence of this worship, when free from the shackles of a sacerdotal caste, has been vastly underrated by Christian scholars.‡

* On this subject, see Meiners, *ubi supra*, Vol. I. B. III. ch. i. and ii.

† See in Gibbon (Decline and Fall, ch. xlvii. § 3), the lament of Serapion at the loss of his *concrete Gods*. But it was only the Arian notions that deprived him of his finite God. Jerome condemns the Anthropomorphism of the Polytheists as *stultissimam hæresin*, but believed the divine incarnation in Jesus. See also Prudentius, Apotheosis, Opp. I. p. 430, *et seq.*, London 1824.

‡ The special influence of Polytheism upon morals differed with the different forms it assumed. In India it sometimes led to rigid asceticism, and lofty contemplative quietism; in Rome, to great public activity and manly vigour; in Greece, to a gay abandonment to the natural emotions; in Persia, to ascetic purity and formal devotion. On this subject see the curious and able, but one-sided and partial treatise of Tholuck on the Moral Influence of Heathenism, in the American Biblical Repository, Vol. II. He has shown up the dark side of heathenism, but seems to have no true conception of ancient manners and life. See Ackermann, das Christliche, in Plato, &c., ch. i. (See next page, note †.)

To trace the connection between the public virtue and the popular theology is a great and difficult matter, not to be attempted here. But this fact is plain, that in a rude state of life, this connection is slight, scarce perceptible: the popular worship expresses Fear, Reverence it may be—perhaps a Hope—or even Trust; but the services it demands are rites and offerings, not a divine life. As civilization is advanced, Religion claims a more reasonable service, and we find enlightened men, whom the spirit of God made wise, demanding only a divine life as an offering to Him. Spiritual men, of the same elevation, see always the same spiritual truth. We notice a gradual ascent in the scale of moral ideas, from the time of Homer, through Solon, Theognis, the Seven Wise Men, Pindar, Æschylus, Sophocles, and the philosophers of their day.* The philosophers and sages of Greece and Rome recommend absolute goodness as the only perfect service of God. With them Sin is the disease of the soul—Virtue its health; a divine Life the true good of mankind—Perfection the aim. None have set forth this more ably.†

In the higher stages of Polytheism, man is regarded as fallen. He felt his alienation from his Father. Religion looks back longingly to the Golden Age, when Gods dwelt familiar with men. It seeks to restore the links broken out of the divine chain. Hence its sacrifices, and above all its mysteries,‡ both of which were often abused, and made substitutes for holiness, and not symbols thereof.

When War is a normal state, and Slavery is common, the

* See the proof of this in Brandis, Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I. § 24, 25.

† See, on the moral culture of the Greeks, in special, Jacob's Vermischte Schriften, Vol. III. p. 374. He has done justice to both sides of this difficult subject.

‡ Cicero, De Leg. II. See on this subject of the mysteries in general, Lobeck, Aglaophamus, sive de Theologiæ Mysticæ Causis, &c. Pars III. ch. iii. and iv. The mysteries seem sometimes to have offered beautiful symbols to aid man in returning to union with the Gods. Warburton, in spite of his erroneous views, has collected much useful information on this subject; Divine Legation, Book II. § 4. But he sometimes sees out of him what existed only in himself.

condition of one-half the human race is soon told. Woman is a tool or a toy: her story is hitherto the dark side of the world. If a distinction be made between public morality, private morality, and domestic morality, it may safely be said that Polytheism did much for the outward regulation of the two first, but little for the last. However, since there were Gods that watched over the affairs of the household, a limit was theoretically set to domestic immorality, spite of the temptations which both slavery and public opinion spread in the way. When there were Gods, whose special vocation was to guard the craftsmen of a certain trade, protect travellers, and defenceless men—when there were general, never-dying avengers of wrong, who stopped at no goal but justice,—a bound was fixed, in some measure, to private oppression. Man, however, was not honoured as man. Even in Plato's ideal State, the strong tyrannized over the weak; human selfishness wore a bloody robe; Patriotism was greater than Philanthropy. The popular view of sin and holiness was low. It was absurd for Mercury to conduct men to hell for adultery and lies. Heal thyself, the Shade would say. All Pagan antiquity offers nothing akin to our lives of pious men.* It is true, as St. Augustine has well said, "that matter which is now called the Christian religion was in existence among the ancients; it has never been wanting, from the beginning of the human race."† There is but one Religion, and it can never die out. Unquestionably there were souls beautifully pious, and devoutly moral, who felt the Kingdom of Heaven in their bosom, and lived it out in their lowly life. Still, it must be confessed, the beneficial influence of the public Religion of Polytheists on public and private virtue, was sadly weak. The popular life is determined, in some measure, by the popular conception of God, and that was low, and did not

* But see in Plutarch the singular story of Thespesius, his miraculous conversion, &c. De sera Numinis Vindicta, Opp. II. ch. xxvii. p. 563, *et seq.*, ed. Xylander.

† Retract. I. 13. See also Civ. Dei, VIII., and Cont. Acad. III. 20.

correspond to the pure idea of Him;* still the sentiment was at its work.

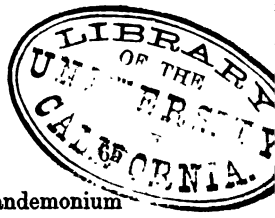
But Religion was more obviously woven up with public life under this form, than under that which subsequently took its place. A wedding or a funeral, peace and war, seed-time and harvest, had each its religious rite. She was the mother of philosophy, of art, and science, though, like Saturn in the fable, she sought to devour her own children, and met a similar and well-merited fate. Classic Polytheism led to contentedness with the world as it was, and a sound cheerful enjoyment of its goodness and beauty. Religion itself was glad and beautiful.† But its idea of life was little higher than its fact. However, that weakish cant and snivelling sentimentality usurping the name of Religion—which disgrace our day, were unknown at that stage.‡ The popular faith oscillated between Unbelief and Superstition. Plato wisely excluded the mythological poets from his ideal commonwealth. The character of the Gods, as it was painted by the popular mythology of Egypt, Greece, and India, like some of the legends of the Old Testament, served to confound moral distinctions and encourage crime. Polytheists themselves confess it.§ Yet a distinction seems often to have been made between the private and the official charac-

* Plato is seldom surpassed in his conception of the Divine Being, by any one since his day. He was mostly free from that anthropomorphitic tendency which Christians have derived from the Old Testament. See Rep. Lib. VI.

† See the pleasant remarks of Plutarch on the cheerful character of public worship, Opp. Vol. II. p. 1101, *et seq.*; Strabo, Lib. X. ch. iii. iv. Opp. iv. p. 169, *et seq.*, ed. Siebenkees and Tschucke.

‡ Many beautiful traits of Polytheism may be seen in Plutarch's Moral Works, especially the treatises on Superstition. That it is not possible to live well according to Epicurus; of Isis and Osiris; of the tardy vengeance of God, see the English version, Lond. 1691, 4 vols. 8vo.

§ Xenophanes, a contemporary of Pythagoras, censures Homer and Hesiod for their narratives of the Gods, imputing to them what it was shameful for a man to think of. ' See Karsten, Phil. Vett. Reliquæ, Vol. I. p. 43, *et seq.* See Plato, Repub. II. p. 377; Pindar, Olymp. I. 28. But no religion was ever designed to favour impurity, even when it allows it in the Gods. See the fine remarks of Seneca, De Vita Beata, ch. xxvi. § 5–6. Even the Gods were subject to the eternal laws. Fate punished Zeus for each offence: he smarted at home for his infidelity abroad.



ter of the deities. There was no devil nor pandemonium in Grecian Polytheism as in the modern Church: Antiquity has no such disgrace to bear. Perhaps the poetic fictions about the Gods were regarded always as fictions, and no more. Still this influence must have been pernicious.* It would seem, at first glance, that only strong intellectual insight, or great moral purity, or a happy combination of external circumstances, could free man from the evil. However, in forming the morals of a people, it is not so much the doctrine that penetrates and moves the nation's soul, as it is the feeling of that sublimity which resides only in God, and of that enchanting loveliness which alone belongs to what is filled with God. Isocrates well called the mythological tales blasphemies against the Gods. Aristophanes exposes in public the absurdities which were honoured in the recesses of the temples. The priesthood in Greece had no armour of offence against ridicule.† But goodness never dies out of man's heart.

Mankind pass slowly from stage to stage:

> "Slowly as spreads the green of earth
> O'er the receding ocean's bed,
> Dim as the distant stars come forth,
> Uncertain as a vision fled,"

seems the gradual progress of the race. But in the midst of the absurd doctrines of the priests, and the immoral tales wherewith mistaken poets sought to adorn their conception of God, pure hearts beat, and lofty minds rose above the grovelling ideas of the temple and the market-place. The people who know not the law, are often better off than the sage or the soothsayer, for they know only what it is needed to know. "He is oft the wisest man that is not wise at all." Religion lies so close to man, that a pure

* See the classic passages in Aristophanes, Clouds, 1065, *et seq.*

† It still remains unexplained how the Athenians, on a religious festival, could attend the exhibitions of the comic drama, which exposed the popular mythology to ridicule — as it is done in the Birds of Aristophanes, to mention a single example — and still continue the popular worship.

heart and mind, free from prejudice, see its truths, its duties, and its hopes. But before mankind passes from Fetichism to pure Monotheism, at a certain stage of religious progress, there are two subordinate forms of religious speculation, which claim the attention of the race,—namely, Dualism and Pantheism. The one is the highest form of Polytheism; the other a degenerate expression of Monotheism; and both together form the logical tie between the two.

Dualism is the deification of two principles—the Absolute Good, and the greatest Evil. The origin of this form of religious speculation has been already hinted at.* Philosophically stated, it is the recognition of two absolute beings—the one Supreme Good, the other Supreme Evil. But this involves a contradiction; for if the Good is absolute, the Evil is not, and the reverse. Another form, therefore, was invented. The Good Being was absolute and infinite; the Evil Principle was originally good, but did not keep his first estate. Here also was another difficulty: an independent and divine being cannot be mutable and frail; therefore the evil principle must of necessity be a dependent creature, and not divine in the proper sense. So a third form takes place, in which it is supposed that both the Good and the Evil are emanations from one Absolute Being; that Evil is only negative, and will at last end; that all wicked, as all good principles, are subject to the Infinite God. At this point Dualism coalesces with the doctrine of one God, and dies its death. This system of Dualism, in its various forms, has extended widely. It seems to have been most fully developed in Persia. It came early into the Christian Church, and still retains its hold throughout the greater part of Christendom, though it is fast dying away before the advance of Reason and Faith.†

* See above, p. 49.

† The doctrine of two principles is older than the time of Zoroaster. Hyde, Hist.

Pantheism has, perhaps, never been altogether a stranger to the world. It makes all things God, and God all things. This view seems at first congenial to a poetic and religious mind. If the world be regarded as a collection of powers, —the awful force of the storm, of the thunder, the earthquake; the huge magnificence of the ocean, in its slumber or its wrath; the sublimity of the ever-during hills; the rocks which resist all but the unseen hand of time;—these might lead to the thought that they were God. If men look at the order, fitness, beauty, love, everywhere apparent in nature, the impression is confirmed. The All of things appears so beautiful to the comprehensive eye, that we almost think it is its own Cause and Creator. The animals find their support and their pleasure; the painted leopard and the snowy swan, each living by its own law; the bird of passage, that pursues from zone to zone its unmarked path; the summer warbler which sings out its melodious existence in the woodbine; the flowers that come unasked, charming the youthful year; the golden fruit maturing in its wilderness of green; the dew and the rainbow; the frost-flake and the mountain snow; the glories that wait upon the morning, or sing the sun to his ambrosial rest; the pomp of the sun at noon, amid the clouds of a June day; the awful majesty of night, when all the stars with a serene step come out, and tread their round, and seem to watch in blest tranquillity about the slumbering world; the moon waning and waxing, walking in beauty through the night:

Religionis Vet. Persarum. ch. ix. and xx. xxii.; Bayle's Dictionary, article Zoroaster, Vol. V. p. 636. See also Cudworth, ch. iv. § 13, p. 289, *et seq.*; and Mosheim's Notes, Vol. I. p. 320, *et seq.*; Rhode, Heilige Sage der Zendvolks, B. II. ch. ix. x. xii.; Brucker, Historia Philosophiæ, Vol. I. p. 176, *et seq.* Plutarch was a Dualist, though in a modified sense. See his Isis and Osiris, and Psychogonia. Marcion, among the early Christians, was accused of this belief; and indeed the existence of a devil is still believed, by most Christian divines, to be second only in importance to the belief of a God; at the very least a *scriptural doctrine, and of great value.* See a curious book of Mayer (Historia Diaboli), who thinks it a matter of *divine revelation.* See also the ingenious remarks of Professor Woods, in his translation of Knapp's Theology, New York 1831, Vol. I. *et seq.*, § 62–66. See the early forms of Dualism among the Christians, in Beausobre, Histoire de Manichée et du Manichéisme, 2 vols. 4to.

—daily the water is rough with the winds; they come or abide at no man's bidding, and roll the yellow corn, or wake religious music at night-fall in the pines. These things are all so fair, so wondrous, so wrapt in mystery, that it is no marvel men say, "This is divine!" Yes! the All is God. He is the light of the morning, the beauty of the noon, and the strength of the sun. The little grass grows by his presence. He preserveth the cedars. The stars are serene because He is in them. The lilies are redolent of God. He is the One—the All. God is the mind of man; the soul of all—more moving than motion, more stable than rest, fairer than beauty, and stronger than strength. The power of nature is God. The universe—broad and deep and high—a handful of dust, which God enchants. He is the mysterious magic that possesses the world. Yes! He is the All—the Reality of all phenomena!

But an old writer thus pleasantly rebukes this conclusion: "Surely, vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not, out of the good things that are seen, know him that is but deemed either Fire, or Wind, or the swift Air, or the Circle of the Stars, or the violent Water, or the Lights of Heaven, to be the Gods which govern the world: with whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be Gods; let them know how much better the Lord of them is, for the first Author of Beauty hath created them."*

* Wisdom of Solomon, xiii. 1, *et seq.* At the present day, Pantheism seems to be the bugbear of some excellent persons. They see it everywhere except in the dark walls of their own churches. The disciples of Locke find it in all schools of philosophy but the Sensual; the followers of Calvin see it in the liberal churches. It has become dangerous to say "*God is Spirit:*" a *definite* God, whose *personality we understand*, is the orthodox article. M. Maret, in his Essai sur le Panthéisme dans les Sociétés Modernes, Paris 1840, 1 vol. 8vo, finds it the natural result of Protestantism, and places before us the pleasant alternatives—either the Catholic Church or Pantheism;—Preface, p. xv. *et al.* The rationalism of the nineteenth century must end in scepticism, or leap over to Pantheism. According to him, all the philosophers of the Spiritual School in our day are Pantheists. Formerly, divines condemned Philosophy because it had *too little* of God; now, because it has *too much*. It would seem difficult to get the orthodox medium; too much and too little are found equally

To view the subject in a philosophical and abstract way: Pantheism is the worship of All as God. He is the One and All; not conceived as distinct from the Universe, nor independent of it. It is said to have prevailed widely in ancient times, and, if we may believe what is reported, it has not ended with Spinoza. It may be divided into two forms,—Material Pantheism, sometimes called Hylozoism—and Spiritual Pantheism, or Psycho Zoism. Material Pantheism affirms the existence of matter, but denies the existence of spirit, or anything besides matter. Creation is not possible; the Phenomena of nature and life are not the result of a "fortuitous concourse of atoms," as in Atheism, but of Laws in nature itself. Matter is in a constant flux; but it changes only by laws which are themselves immutable. Of course this does not admit God as the Absolute or Infinite, but the sum total of material things; He is limited both to the extension and the qualities of matter; He is merely immanent therein, but does not transcend material form. This seems to have been the Pantheism of Strato, of Lampsacus, of Democritus, perhaps of Hippocrates, and as some think, though erroneously, of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and, in general, of the Eleatic Philosophers in Greece,* and of many others whose tendency is more spiritual.† Its philosophic form is the last result of an attempt to form an adequate *Conception* of God. It has sometimes been called Kosmo-theism (World-Divinity), but it gives us a world without a God.

dangerous. See the pleasant remarks of Hegel on this charge of Pantheism, Encyclopädie der philosoph. Wissenschaften, &c., third edition, § 573.

* See Karsten, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. and II. See the opinions of these men ably summed up by Ritter, Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I. B. V.; and Brandis, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. § 66–72. Cudworth has many fine observations on this sort of Pantheism, Vol. I. ch. iv. § 15–26, and elsewhere. He denies that this school makes the Deity corporeal, and charges this upon others. See ch. iii.

† See Jasche, Der Pantheismus, &c. Vols. II. and III. *passim*, and the histories of Philosophy. If a man is curious to detect a pantheistic tendency, he will find it in the *Soul-of-the-world*, among the ancients, in the *Plastic nature* of Cudworth, or the *Hylarchic principle* of Henry More.

Spiritual Pantheism affirms the existence of Spirit, and sometimes, either expressly or by implication, denies the existence of matter. This makes all Spirit God; always the same, but ever unfolding into new forms, and therefore a perpetual *Becoming;* God is the absolute substance, with these two Attributes—Thought and Extension. He is self-conscious in man, without self-consciousness in animals; before the creation of man, he was not *self*-conscious. All beside God is devoid of Substantiality; it is not, but only APPEARS; its *being* is its *being seen.* This is Psycho-theism (Soul-Divinity.) It gives us a God without a World, and He is the only cause that exists, the Sum-total of Spirit; immanent in spirit, but not transcending spiritual manifestations. This was the Pantheism of Spinoza and some others. It lies at the bottom of many mystical discourses, and appears more or less in most of the pious and spiritual writers of the middle ages, who confound the Divine Being with their own personality, and yet find some support for their doctrines in the language, more or less figurative, of the New Testament.

This system appears more or less in the writings of John the Evangelist, in Dionysius the Areopagite, and the many authors who have drawn from him. It tinges in some measure the spiritual philosophy of the present day.* But the charge of Pantheism is very vague, and is usually urged most by such as know least of its meaning. He who conceives of God, as transcending Creation indeed, but at the same time as the *immanent* cause of all things—as infinitely

* See the curious forms this assumes in Theologia Mystica speculativa et affectiva, per Henric Harph, etc., Colon. 1538. Jasche and Maret find it in all the modern spiritual philosophy. Indeed the two rocks that threaten theology seem to be a Theosophy which resolves all into God, and Anthropomorphism, which in fact denies the Infinite. This mystical tendency, popularly denominated Pantheism, appears in the ancient religions of the East; it enters largely into the doctrine of the *Sufis*, a Mahometan sect. See Tholuck, Blüthensamlung aus der Morgenlandischen Mystik, p. 33 *et seq.* and *passim.* Von-Hammer also, in his Geschichte der schönen Redekunste Persens, &c. p. 340 *et seq.*, 347 *et seq.*, *et al.*, gives extracts from those Oriental speculators who are charged with Pantheism.

present and infinitely active, with no limitations—is sure to be called a Pantheist in these days, as he would have passed for an Atheist two centuries ago. Some who have been called by this easy but obnoxious name, both in ancient and modern times, have been philosophical defenders of the doctrine of one God, but have given him the historical form neither of Brahma nor Jehovah.*

III. Monotheism is the worship of one Supreme God. It may admit numerous divine beings superior to man, yet beneath the Supreme Divinity, as the Jews, the Mahometans, and the Christians, have done; or it may deny these subsidiary beings, as some philosophers have taught. The Idea of God which legitimately belongs to Monotheism, is that of a Being infinitely powerful, wise, and good. He may, however, be supposed to manifest himself in *one form* only, as the Jehovah of the Hebrews, and the Allah of the Mahometans; in *three forms*, as the Triune God of most Christians; or in *all forms*, as the Pan and Brahma of the Greek and Indian; for it is indifferent whether we ascribe no form, or all forms, to the Infinite.

Since the form of Monotheism prevails at this day, little need be said to pourtray its most important features. It annihilates all distinction of nations, tribes, and men: there is one God for all mankind. He has no favourites, but is the equal Father of them all. War and Slavery are repugnant to its Spirit, for men are brothers. There is no envy, strife, or confusion among the Gods, to justify hostility

* The writings of Spinoza have hitherto been supposed to contain the most pernicious form of Pantheism; but of late the poison has been detected also in the works of Schleiermacher, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Cousin, not to mention others of less note. Pantheism is a word of convenient ambiguity, and serves as well to express the *odium theologicum* as the more ancient word Atheism, which has been deemed, by some, to be synonymous with Philosophy. See the recent controversial writings of Mr. Norton and Mr. Ripley, respecting the Pantheism of Spinoza and Schleiermacher. It has been well said, the question between the alleged Pantheist and the pure Theist is simply this: *Is God the immanent cause of the World, or is he not?*

among men. He hears equally the prayer of all, and gives them infinite good at last. No priesthood is needed to serve Him. Under Fetichism, every man could have access to his God, for divine symbols were more numerous than men; miracles were performed every day; inspiration was common, but of little value; the favour of the Gods was a wonderful and miraculous command over nature. Under Polytheism, only a chosen few had direct access to God; an appointed Priesthood, a sacerdotal caste;—they stood between man and the Gods. Divine symbols became more rare. Inspiration was not usual; a miracle was a most uncommon thing; the favourites of heaven were children born of the Gods, admitted to intercourse with them, or enabled by them to do wonderful works. Now Monotheism would restore inspiration to all. By representing God as Spiritual and Omnipresent, it brings him within every man's reach; by making him infinitely perfect, it shows his Wisdom, Love, and Will, always the same. Therefore, it annihilates favouritism and all capricious miracles. Inspiration, like the sun-light, awaits all who will accept its conditions. All are Sons of God; they only are his favoured ones who serve him best. No day, nor spot, nor deed, is exclusively sacred; but all time, and each place, and every noble act. The created All is a Symbol of God.

But here also human perversity and ignorance have done their work; have attempted to lessen the symbols of the Deity; to make him of difficult access; to bar up the fountain of Truth and source of Light still more than under Polytheism, by the establishment of places and times, of rituals and creeds; by the appointment of exclusive priests to mediate, where no mediator is needed or possible; by the notion that God is capricious, revengeful, uncertain, partial to individuals or nations; by taking a few doctrines, and insisting on exclusive belief; by selecting a few from the many alleged miracles, insisting that these, and these alone, shall be accepted, and thus making the religious duty of

man arbitrary and almost contemptible. Still, however, no human ignorance, no perversity, no pride of priest or king, can long prevent this doctrine from doing its vast and beautiful work. It struggles mightily with the Sin and Superstition of the world, and at last will overcome them.

The history of this doctrine is instructive. It was said above that there were three elements to be considered in this matter,—namely, the Sentiment of God; the Idea of God; and the Conception of God. The Sentiment is vague and mysterious, but always the same thing in kind, only felt more or less strongly, and with more or less admixture of foreign elements. The Idea is always the same in itself, as it is implied and writ in man's constitution; but is seen with more or less of a distinct consciousness. Both of these lead to Unity—to Monotheism; and accordingly, in the prayers and hymns, the festivals and fasts of Fetichists and Polytheists, we find often as clear and definite intimations of Monotheism, as in the devotional writings of professed Monotheists. In this sense the doctrine is as old as the human race, and has never been lost sight of. This is so plain as to require no proof. But the Conception of God, which men superadd to the Sentiment and Idea of Him, is continually changing with the advance of the world, of the nation, or the man. We can trace its historical development in the writings of Priests and Philosophers and Poets, though it is impossible to say when and where it was first taught with distinct philosophical consciousness that there is one God—one only. The history of this subject demands a treatise by itself.* This, however, is certain, that we find

* Meiners, in his work, Historia Doctrinæ de Vero Deo, &c. 12mo, 1780 (which, though celebrated, is a passionate and one-sided book, altogether unworthy of the subject, and "behind the times" of its composition), maintains that the Heathens knew nothing of the one God till about 3554 years after the creation of the world, when Anaxagoras helped them to this doctrine. See, on the other hand, the broad and philosophical views of Cudworth, ch. iv. *passim*, who, however, seems to push his hypothesis too far sometimes. A history of Monotheism is still to be desired, though Tenneman, Ritter, Brandis, and even Brucker, have collected many facts, and formed valuable contributions to such a work. Münscher has collected valuable passages

signs and proofs of its existence among the earliest poets and philosophers of Greece; in the dim remnants of Egyptian splendour; in the uncertain records of the East; in the spontaneous effusions of savage hearts, and in the most ancient writings of the Jews. The latter have produced such an influence on the world, that their doctrine requires a few words on this point.

The Deity was conceived of by the Hebrews as entirely separate from nature; this distinguishes Judaism from all forms which had a pantheistic tendency, and which deified matter or men. He was the primitive ground and cause of all. But the Jewish Religion did not, with logical consistency, deny the existence of other Gods, inferior to the highest. Here we must consider the doctrine of the *Jewish books*, and that of the *Jewish people*. In the first, the reality of other deities is generally assumed. The first commandment of the decalogue implies the existence of other Gods. The mention of Sons of God who visited the daughters of men; of the divine council or Host of Heaven; the Contract Jacob makes with Jehovah; the frequent reference to *strange Gods;* the preëminence claimed for Jehovah above all the deities of the other nations;*—these things show that the mind of the writers was not decided in favour of the exclusive existence of Jehovah. The people and their kings, before the exile, were strongly inclined to a mingled worship of Fetichism and Polytheism, a medium between the ideal religion of Moses and the actual worship of the

from the Fathers, relating to the history of the doctrine among the Christians, and their controversies with the Heathen; Lehrbuch der Christlichen Dogmengeschichte, 3d ed. by Von Cöln, Vol. I. ch. iv. § 53, *et seq.* But Warburton, who wrote like an attorney, gives the most erroneous judgments upon the ancient heathen doctrine respecting the unity of God. See the temperate remarks of Mosheim, De Rebus ante Constant. &c., p. 17, *et seq.*

* Gen. vi. 2;—Gen. iii. 22; 1 Kings xxii. 19; Job ii. 1;—Gen. xxviii. 20. See also the numerous passages where Jehovah is spoken of as the chief of the Gods; 2 Chr. ii. 5; Ps. xcv. xcvii. 7, *et seq.;* Ex. xii. 12, xv. 11, xviii. 11, &c. &c. Strabo, *ubi sup.* Lib. XVI. ch. ii. § 35, gives a strange account of the Jewish theology.

Canaanites. It is difficult, in the present state of critical investigation, to determine nicely the date of all the different books of the Jews, but this may be safely said, that the early books have more of a polytheistic tendency than the writings of the later prophets; for at length, both the learned and the unlearned became pure Monotheists.* At first, Jehovah and the Elohim seem to be recognised as joint Gods;† but at the end, Jehovah is the *only God.*

But the character assigned Him is fluctuating: He is always the Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth, yet is not always represented as the Father of all nations, but of the Jews only,—who will punish the Heathens with most awful severity.‡ In some parts of the Old Testament He is almighty, omnipresent and omniscient, eternal and unalterable; but in others he is represented with limitations in respect to all these attributes. Not only are the sensual perceptions of a man ascribed to him, for this is unavoidable in popular speech; but he walks on the earth, eats with Abraham, wrestles with Jacob, appears in a visible form to Moses, tempts men, speaks in human speech, is pleased with the fragrant sacrifice, sleeps and awakes, rises early in the morning; is jealous, passionate, revengeful.§ However, in other passages the loftiest attributes are assigned him: He

* Compare with the former passages, Jer. ii. 11, 26–28; Isa. xliv. 6–20; Deut. iv. 28, *et seq.*, xxxii. 16, 17, 39; Ps. cxv. cxxxv., and Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 5, xliii. 28; Wisdom of Sol. xii. 13; Baruch iii. 35. See de Wette, Bib. Dogmatik, § 97 *et seq.*, and 149 *et seq.*, who has collected some of the most important passages.

† See Bauer, Dicta Clara, V. T. &c., 1798, Vol. I. § 41, *et seq.* See also the treatise of Stahl on the appearances of God, &c., in Eichhorn, Bibliothek der bib. Lit., Vol. VII. p. 156, *et seq.*

‡ See an able article on "the Relation of Jehovah to the Heathen," in Eichhorn, *ubi sup.*, Vol. VIII. p. 222, *et seq.* See Ammon's progressive development of Christianity, &c., translated from the German, Vol. I. Book I. ch. i.

§ Lessing well says, the Hebrews proceeded from the conception of the *most powerful* God to that of the *only* God, but remained for a long time far below the true transcendent notion of the one true God;—"Education of the Human Race," Werke, ed. 1824, Vol. XXIV. p. 43–4. See also, on this subject of Hebrew Theism, the valuable but one-sided views of Vatke, Bib. Theologie, Vol. I. § 44, *et seq.* But see also Salvador, Hist. des Institutions de Möise, &c., Brussels 1830, Vol. III. p. 175, *et seq.*

is the God of infinite Love; the Father of all, who possesses the Earth and Heavens.

The conception which a man forms of God depends on the character and attainment of the man himself. This differed with the Jews as with the Greeks, the Christians and the Mahometans. However, this must be confessed, that under the guidance of divine Providence, the great and beautiful doctrine of one God seems quite early embraced by the great Jewish Lawgiver, incorporated into his national legislation, defended with rigorous enactments, and slowly communicated to the world. At our day it is difficult to understand the service rendered to the human race by the mighty soul of Moses, and that a thousand years before Anaxagoras.* His name is ploughed into the history of the world; his influence can never die. It must have been a vast soul, endowed with moral and religious genius to a degree extraordinary among men, that at that early age could attempt to found a State on the doctrine and worship of one God.

Was he the first of the come-outers?—or had others, too far before the age for its acceptance, perished before him in the greatness of their endeavour? History is silent. But the bodies of many Prophets must be rolled into the gulf that yawns wide and deep between the Ideal and the Actual, before the successful man comes, in the fulness of time, at God's command, to lead men into the promised Land, reaping what they did not sow. These men have risen up in all countries and in every time. In the rudest ages as in the most refined, they look through the glass of nature, seeing clearly the invisible things of God, and by the things that are made and the feelings felt, understanding his eternal power and Godhead. They adored Him as the Spirit who dwells in the sun, looks through the stars, speaks in

* Constant, Liv. IV. ch. xi., has some just remarks on the excellence of the Hebrew theology.

the wind, controls the world; is chief of all powers, animal, material, spiritual, and Father of all men—their dear and blessed God. In his light they loved to live—nor feared to die.

There is a great advance from the Fetichism of the Canaanite, to the pure Theism of Moses; from the rude conceptions of the New Zealander, to the refined notions of an enlightened Christian. Ages of progress and revolution seem to separate them, so different is their theology. Yet the Religion of each is the same, distinguished only by the more and less. The change from one of these three religious types to the other is slow; but attended with tumult, war, and suffering. In the ancient civilized nations, little is known of their passage from Fetichism to Polytheism;—it took place at an early age of the world—before written documents were common. We have therefore no records to verify this passage in the history of the Greeks, Egyptians, or Hebrews. Yet in the earliest periods of each of these nations we find monuments which show that Fetichism was not far off; and furnish a lingering but imperfect evidence of the fierce struggle which had gone on. The wrecks of Fetichism strew the shores of Greece and Egypt. Judea furnishes us with some familiar examples.*

In the patriarchal times, if we may trust the mythical stories in Genesis, we find sacred stones which seem to be fetiches, stone pillars, idolatry, worship of Remphan and Chiun while in Egypt and the desert, the golden calf of Aaron and that of Jeroboam, and the goats that were worshipped in the wilderness. Besides, we find the worship of the serpent, a relic of the superstition of Egypt or Phœni-

* The legendary character of the Pentateuch renders it unsafe to depend entirely on its historical statements. Many passages seem to have been originally designed, or at least retouched, by some one who sought to enhance the difference between Moses and the people. Still, the "general drift" of the tradition is not to be mistaken, and can scarcely be wrong. The testimony of the Prophets respecting the early state of the nation is more valuable than that of the Pentateuch itself.

cia; the worship of Baal in its various forms; of Astarte, "Heaven's Queen and Mother;" of Thammuz and Moloch;—all of which seem to be remains of Fetichism. In the very Law itself we find traces of Fetichism. The prohibition of certain kinds of food, garments, and sacrifices; the forms of divination; the altars, feasts, sacrifices, scapegoat, the ornaments of the priest's dress,—all seem to have grown out of the rude worship that formerly prevailed. The old idolatry was spiritualized, its forms modified, and made to serve for the worship of Jehovah. The frequent relapses of king and people prove, on the one hand, that the nation was slowly emerging out of a state of great darkness and superstition; and on the other, that lofty minds and noble hearts were toiling for their redemption.

For many centuries a most bloody contention went on between the ideal Monotheism and the actual idolatry; at times it was a war of extermination. This shows how difficult it is to introduce Monotheism before the nation is ready to receive it. They must wait till they attain the requisite moral and intellectual growth. Before this is reached, they can receive it but in name, and are detained from the ruder, and to them more congenial form, only at the expense of most rigorous laws, suffering, and bloodshed. Before the exile, the Hebrews constantly revolted; afterwards, they never returned to the ruder worship—but ten tribes of the nation were gone for ever.

In the more recent conflict of Monotheism and Polytheism, the history of the Christian and Mahometan religions shows what suffering is endured, first by the advocates of the new, and next by those of the old faith, before the rude doctrine can give place to the better. War and extermination do their work, and remove the unbelieving. Many a country has been Christianized or Mahometanized by the sword. These things have taken place within a few centuries, when the conquering religion was of the mildest character. Are the wars of Charlemagne forgotten? Go

back thousands of years, to the strife between sacerdotal Polytheism and Fetichism, when each was a bloody faith, and imagination cannot paint the horrors of the struggle.

Now, each of these forms represents a truth, or it could not be embraced; a great truth, or it would not prevail widely; — yes, all of truth the man could receive at the time he embraced it. We creep before walking. Mankind has likewise an infancy, though it will at length put away childish things. Each of these forms did the world service in its day. Its truth was essential; its error, the result of accident. It happens in religious as in scientific matters, that a doctrine contains both truth and falsehood. It is accepted for its truth. At first the falsehood does little harm, for it comes in contact with no active faculty in man which detects it.* But gradually the truth does its work, and elevates those who receive it; new faculties awake — the falsehood is seen to be false. The free man would gladly reject it; but the Priesthood, whom interest chains to the old form, though false — or the people, not yet elevated enough to see the truth, — will not allow a man to separate

* We often see the most strange inconsistency between a man's conduct and his creed. The worshipper of Jupiter did not imitate his vices; nor does the modern devotee of some unholy creed, with a Christian name, become what the creed logically demands. A man may hold doctrines which render virtue nugatory — which make the flesh creep with horror; and yet live a divine life, or be gay even to frivolity. The late Dr. Hopkins was a striking illustration of this statement. So long as the religious sentiment preponderates, the false doctrine fails of its legitimate effect.

M. Comte, Vol. V. p. 280, thinks the doctrine of pure Monotheism is perfectly sterile, and incapable of becoming the basis of a true religious system! Judging only from experience, his conclusion is utterly false, but such as might be expected from one who is, as he *boasts*, "equally free from Fetichistic, Polytheistic, and Monotheistic prejudices." He looks longingly to a time when all theism shall have passed away, and the "hypothesis of a God" become exploded! But the true man of science is of all men most modest and reverent. He who has followed Newton through the wondrous soaring of his genius comes grateful to that swan-song, beautiful as it is sublime, with which he finishes his flight, and sings of the ONE CAUSE, ETERNAL and INFINITE, who rules the all. It cannot be heard without a tear of joy. Principia, edition 1833, Vol. IV. p. 199, 201 — "Et hi omnes," &c. &c. See, too, the beautiful and pious conclusion of Mr. Whewell to his Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Vol. II. p. 582–3.

the false from the true. It says to the Prophet and the Sage—"Thou shalt accept the old doctrine, as we and our fathers; it is from God—the only Rule. Unless thou accept it on the same authority, and in the same way as ourselves, we will burn thee and thy children with fire. Thou mayst live as likest thee; thou shalt believe with us." The free man replies—"Burn, then, if thou wilt: but Truth thou canst not burn down; a lie thou canst not build up. God does not die with his children, nor Truth with its martyrs."

Then as Truth is stronger than every Lie, and he that has her is mightier than all men; so the faggot of martyrdom proves the fire-pillar of the human race, guiding them from the bondage and darkness of Egypt, to the land of liberty and light. Truth, armed with her arrows to smite, her olive to bless, spreads wide her wings amid the outcry of the Priest and the King. At last, Error goes down to the ground, but, because honoured beyond her time, takes with her temple and tower in her fall.

The Truth represented by Fetichism is this: The unknown God is present in matter; spiritual power is the strongest of forces. Its error was to make matter God. The truth of Polytheism is: God is present, and active, everywhere — in Space, in Spirit; breathes in the wind, speaks in the storm, inspires to acts of virtue, helps the efforts of all true men. Its falsehood was, it divided God, and gave but a chaos of Deity. When the falsehood was seen and felt to be such, and its truth believed in for itself, on its own authority, then was the time for Fetichism and Polytheism to fall. So they fell, never to rise again; for mankind never apostatizes. One generation takes up the Ark of Religion where another let it fall, and carries forward the hope of the world. The old form never passes away, till all its truth is transferred to the new. These types of religious progress are but the frames on which the artist spreads the canvass while he paints his piece. The

frame may perish when this is done. Fetichism and Polytheism did good — not because they were Fetichism and Polytheism, but because Religion was in them.

Such, then, are the three great forms assumed by this religious sentiment. We cannot understand the mental and religious state of men who saw the divine in a serpent, a cat, or an enchanted ring; not even that of superstitious Christians, who make earth a demon-land, and the one God but a King of Devils. Yet each religious doctrine has sometime stood for a truth. It was devised to help pious hearts, and has imperfectly accomplished its purpose. It could not have been but as it was. Looking carelessly at the past, the history of man's religious consciousness appears but a series of revolutions. What is to-day built up with prayers and tears, is pulled down to-morrow with shouting and bloodshed, giving place to a new fabric equally transient. Prophets were mistaken, and saints confounded. Religious history is the tale of confusion. But looking deeper, we see that it is a series of developments, all tending towards one great and beautiful end,—the harmonious perfection of man; that in theology as in other science, in in morals as in theology, the circle of his vision becomes wider continually; his opinions more true; his ideal more fair and sublime. Each form that has been, bore its justification in itself; an evil that "God winked at," to use the bold figure of a great man. It was natural and indispensable in its time and place; a part of the scheme of agencies provided from before the foundation of the world. Each form may perish; but its truth never dies. Nations pass away. A handful of red dust alone marks the spot where a metropolis opened its hundred gates; but Religion does not perish. Cities and nations mark the steps of her progress. A nation at the head of the civilized world organizes Religion as well it can; perpetuates and diffuses its truth, and thus preaches the advent of a higher faith, and pre-

pares its way. Each failnre is a prophecy of the Perfect. But the change from faith to faith is attended with persecution on the one side, and martyrdom on the other. A little philosophy turns men from Religion: much knowledge restores them to their faith—to the bosom of Piety. The great men of the world—men gifted with the deepest insight, and living the most royal life—have been man's pioneers in these steps of progress. Moses, Hermes, Confucius, Budha, Zoroaster, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, have lent their holy hands in man's greatest work. Religion filled their souls with strength and light. It is only little men that make wide the mouth and draw out the tongue at pure and genuine piety and nobleness of heart. Shall we not judge the world, as a rose, by its best side? God, of his wisdom, raises up men of religious genius—heaven-sent prophets—born fully armed and fitted for their fearful work. They have an eye to see through the reverend hulls of falsity—to detect the truth a long way off. They send their eagle gaze far down into the heart—far on into the future, thinking for ages not yet born. The word comes from God with blessed radiance upon their mind;—they must speak the tidings from on high, and shed its beamy light on men around, till the heavy lids are opened, and the sleepy eye beholds. But alas for him who moves in such work! If there be not superhuman might to sustain him—if his soul be not naked of selfishness, he will say often—"Alas for me!—would God my mother had died or ever I was born, to bear all the burdens of the world, and right its wrongs!" He that feareth the Lord—when was not he a prey? He must take his life in his hand, and become as a stranger to men. But if he fall and perish, it is his gain. Is it not the world's? It is the burning wood that warms men.

In passing judgment on these different religious states, we are never to forget that there is no monopoly of Religion

by any nation or any age. Religion itself is one and the same. He that worships truly, by whatever form, worships the Only God: He hears the prayer, whether called Brahma, Jehovah, Pan, or Lord; or called by no name at all. Each people has its Prophets and its Saints; and many a swarthy Indian, who bowed down to wood and stone—many a grim-faced Calmuck, who worshipped the great God of Storms—many a Grecian peasant, who did homage to Phœbus-Apollo when the Sun rose or went down—yes, many a savage, his hands smeared all over with human sacrifice, shall come from the East and the West, and sit down in the Kingdom of God with Moses and Zoroaster, with Socrates and Jesus; —while men, who called daily on the only living God, who paid their tribute, and bowed at the name of Christ, shall be cast out, because they did no more. Men are to be judged by what is given, not by what is withheld.

CHAPTER VI.

OF CERTAIN DOCTRINES CONNECTED WITH RELIGION:

I. OF THE PRIMITIVE STATE OF MANKIND.
II. OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

I. OF THE PRIMITIVE STATE OF MANKIND.

VARIOUS theories have been connected with Religion, respecting the origin and primitive condition of the human race. Many nations have claimed to be the primitive possessors of their native soil—Autochthones, who sprang miraculously out of the ground, were descended from stones, grasshoppers, emmets, or other created things. Others call themselves children of the Gods.* Some nations trace back their descent to a time of utter barbarism, whence the Gods recalled them; others start from a golden age as the primitive condition of man.† The latter opinion prevailed with the Hebrews, from whom the Christians have derived it. According to them, the primitive state was one of the highest felicity, from which man fell. The primitive wor-

* Diodorus Siculus says, somewhere, all ancients claim to be the *most ancient.*

† See the heathen view of this in Hesiod, Opera et Dies; Lucretius V. 923, *et seq.*; Virgil, Georg. I. 125, *et seq.*, Ecl. IV.; Ovid, Met. I. 89, *et seq.*; Plato, Polit. p. 271, *et seq.* See Heyne, Opusc. Vol. III. p. 24, *et seq.*; 1 Hesiod's Theog. 521–579. See other parallels in Bauer's Mythologie des A. T. &c. Vol. I. p. 85, *et seq.* See also the curious speculations of Eichhorn (Urgeschichte, ed. Gabler), Büttmann (Mythologus), and Hartmann (über des Pentateuch.) Compare Rosenmüller (Alter-thumskunde, Vol. I. Part I. p. 180, *et seq.*) and the striking passage in Kleuker's Zendavesta, Vol. II. p. 211, 227, *et seq.*; III. p. 85. See Rhodes' remarks upon the passages *ubi sup.*, p. 388, *et seq.* See Bauer, Dicta clara, § 52.

ship, therefore, must have been the normal Religion of mankind.

This difficult question then presents itself: From what point did the human race set out,—from civilization and the true worship of one God, or from cannibalism and the deification of nature? Has the human race fallen or risen? The question is purely historical, and to be answered by historical witnesses. But in the presence, and still more in the absence, of such witnesses, the *à priori* doctrines of the man's philosophy affect his decision. Reasoning with no facts is as easy as all motion *in vacuo*. The analogy of the geological formation of the earth—its gradual preparation, so to say, for the reception of plants and animals, the ruder first, and then the more complex and beautiful, till at last she opens her bosom to man,—this, in connection with many similar analogies, would tend to show that a similar order was to be expected in the affairs of men—development from the lower to the higher, and not the reverse. In strict accordance with this analogy, some have taught that man was created in the lowest stage of savage life; his Religion the rudest worship of nature; his Morality that of the cannibal; that all of the civilized races have risen from this point, and gradually passed through Fetichism and Polytheism, before they reached refinement and true Religion. The spiritual man is the gradual development of germs latent in the natural man.*

* M. Comte pushes this doctrine to the farthest extreme, Vol. V. p. 32, *et al.* Here arises the kindred question, Have all the human race descended from a single pair, or started up in the various parts of the earth where we find them? The first opinion has been defended by the Christian church, in general with more obstinacy than argument. Pritchard, *ubi sup.*, derives all from one stock, and collects many interesting facts relative to the human race in various conditions. But the unity of the race is not to be made out *genealogically*; it is *essential to the nature* of mankind. Augustine has some curious speculations on this head, De Civitate Dei, XII. 21; XIII. 19–23; XIV. 10–12, 16–26. Lactantius, Institut. II. 11; VII. 4. See the opinions of Buddeus, and the curious literature he cites, Hist. Ecclesiastica, Vol. I. p. 92, *et seq.* On the other hand, Palfrey's Academical Lectures, Vol. II. Lect. xxi.–xxii.; Kant, von der Racen der Menschen, Werke, Vol. VI. p. 313, *et seq.*; Begriff einer Menschenrace, ib. p. 333, *et seq.*; Muthmaaslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte,

Another party, consisting more of poets and dogmatists than of philosophers, teaches the opposite doctrine, that a single human pair was created in the full maturity of their powers, with a perfect morality and Religion; that they *fell* from this state, and while some few kept alive the lamp of Truth, and passed it on from hand to hand, that the mass sunk into barbarity and sin, from whence they are slowly emerging, aided of course by the traditional torch of Truth, still kept by their more fortunate brothers.*

Now in favour of this latter opinion there is no direct historical testimony except the legendary and mythological writings of the Hebrews, which have no more authority in the premises than the similar narratives of the Phœnicians, the Persians, and Chinese. If we *assume* the miraculous authority of these legends, the matter ends—in an assumption. The indirect testimony in favour of this doctrine is this: The opinion, found in many nations, that there had once been a golden age. Now, if this opinion were universal, it would not prove the fact alleged, for it can easily

ib. Vol. VII. p. 363, *et seq.* Even Schleiermacher departs from the common view; Christliche Glanbe, § 60–61. See, on the other side, the ingenious observations of Samuel S. Smith, Inquiry into the Causes of Different Complexions, &c. of the Human Race. To make out the case, that all men are descended from a primitive pair, it is only necessary to assume, *philosophically*, a principle in the first man, whence all varieties may be derived, and then, *historically*, to assume the derivation; and the circle is complete. Kames has some disingenuous remarks, in his History of Man, Preliminary Discourse.

* See this, which is the prevalent opinion, set forth by Knapp, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. § 54–57; Hahn, Lehrbuch der Christ. Glaube, § 74–75; Tholuck, in Biblical Repository, Vol. II. p. 119, *et seq.*; Hopkins' System of Doctrines, &c. 2d edit. Vol. I. Part I. chap. v. viii. Bretschneider, Dogmatik, 4th edit. Vol. I. § 112, *et seq.*, gives the Lutheran view of this subject, *but thinks Oken is no heretic for maintaining* (in the Isis for 1819, Vol. II. p. 1118), *that man may have arisen from an embryo with human qualities in the slime of the sea!* p. 812. See Jeremy Taylor, Doctrine and Practice of Repentance, chap. vi., and the conflicting remarks in the Sermon at the funeral of Sir George Dalston. See Jonathan Edwards, Original Sin, Part II. chap. i., and Notes on Bible, Works, Lond. 1839, Vol. II. p. 689, *et seq.* More on the same subject may be seen in Faber's Horæ Mosaicæ, Edwards on the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures, Collier's Lectures on Scripture Facts, Gray's Connection between Sacred and Profane Literature, Cormack's Inquiry, Fletcher's Appeal, Deane's Worship of the Serpent, &c. &c. See the opinions of the Ancients on the creation and primitive state of Man, collected in Grotius, De Veritate, ed. Clericus, Lib. I. § 16.

be explained from the notorious tendency of men, in a low state of civilization, to aggrandize the past: the senses delight to remember. The opinion only serves to illustrate this tendency. The sensual Greek often looked longingly backward to the Golden Age; but the more spiritual prophet of the Hebrews looks forward to the Kingdom of Heaven yet to be. But the opinion prevails among many nations, that they have slowly advanced from a ruder state.*

Again, it is often alleged that no nation has ever risen out of the savage state except under the influence of tribes previously enlightened—an historical thesis which has never been proved. No one knows whence the Chinese, the Mexicans, the Peruvians, derived assistance. We have yet to be told who taught the Greenlander to build his boat; the Otaheitan to fashion his war-club; the Sacs and Pawnees to handle the hatchet, cook the flesh of the buffalo, and wear his skin. Besides, it is begging the question to say that the civilization of Rome, Athens, Tyre, Judea, Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, came from the traditionary knowledge of some primitive people. If a savage nation in seven centuries can learn to use oil and tallow for light, in a time sufficiently long it may write the Iliad, and build the Parthenon.

Again, it is said that traces of Monotheism are found in all the lower stages of religion. This must necessarily follow from the identity of the human race—from the Sentiment and Idea of God, expressing themselves spontaneously. If man is the same in all ages, and this sentiment is natural to him, then we must expect to find such expressions of it in the poets and philosophers—in the religion of India, Greece, and Rome. Men of the same spiritual elevation see everywhere the same spiritual truth. If this doctrine of Monotheism proceed from tradition alone, then it

* Strauss, Die Christ. Glaubenslehre, 1840-41, Vol. I. § 45, *et seq.*, decides against the hypothesis of a single pair, and even ascribes the origin of man to the power of *equivocal generation*. But his arguments in favour of the latter have little or no weight. See Kames, *ubi sup.*

must be more clear and distinct as we approach the source of the tradition. But this is notoriously contrary to facts.*

The opposite doctrine has no more of *direct* historical testimony in its favour, but is supported by many indirect testimonies;—by the fact, that the greater part of the human race are still in the condition of Fetichism and Polytheism, and that the farther we go back in history the worse is this state, and the ruder their religion. In the days of Herodotus, the proportion of rude and savage people was far greater than at this day. Even in that nation alleged to be the most highly favoured, we find their social, moral, and religious condition is more rude the farther we trace it back. They and other nations, at the time we first meet them in history, bordered close upon the Fetichistic state to which their mythology refers. No nation has ever been found in a perfect state of religious culture.

If we reason only from established facts, we must conclude, that the hypothesis of a golden age—a garden of Eden—a perfect condition of man on the earth in ancient times,—is purely gratuitous. The Kingdom of Heaven is not behind but before us. No one can determine what was the primitive state of the human race, or when, or where, or how mankind, at the command of God, came into existence. Here our conclusions can be only negative.†

II. ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

The doctrine that man lives for ever seems almost as general as the belief in a God. Like that, it comes naturally

* Voltaire, Essai sur les Mœurs, &c. edit. 1785, Vol. I. p. 17 *et seq.*, 29 *et seq.*, has many just remarks on the ruder periods of society.

† Constant, Liv. X. ch. vi., treats this subject with a superficiality unusual even with him, and concludes that the doctrine of a Fall is a device of the Priesthood. See some admirable remarks on the savage state in De Maistre, Soirées de St. Petersburg, Vol. I. See also Leroux's criticism on the opinions of Jouffroy and Pascal, Réfutation de l'Eclecticism, 1840, p. 330, *et seq.* Leroux believes in the progress of all species, Man, the Beaver, and the Bee. M. Maret, *ubi sup.*, p. 30 *et seq.* and 240 *et seq.*, makes some very judicious observations.

from an eternal desire in the human heart—a longing after the Infinite. In the rudest nations, and the most civilized, this doctrine appears. Perhaps there has never been but a single form of Religion under which it was not taught plainly and distinctly, and here it was continually implied. It seems we have by nature a sentiment of immortality—an instinctive belief therein. Rude nations, in whom instinct seems to predominate, trust the spontaneous belief. They construct an ideal world, in which the shade of the departed pursues his calling and finds justice at the last; recompense for his toil—right for his earthly wrongs. The conception of the form of future life depends on the condition and character of the believer. Hence it is a state of war or peace—of sensual or spiritual delight—of reform or progress, with different nations. The notion formed of the next world is the index of man's state in this. Here the Idolater and the Pantheist, the Mahometan and the Christian, express their conflicting views of life. The Sentiment and Idea of immortality may be true; but the definite conception must be mainly subjective, and therefore false. In a low stage of civilization the doctrine, like Religion itself, seems to have but little influence on life. It presents no motive to virtue, and therefore does not receive the same place in their system, as at a subsequent period.

In rude ages, men reason but little. As they begin to be civilized, they ask proofs of Immortality,—not satisfied with the instinctive feeling—not convinced that Infinite Goodness will do what is best for all and each of his creatures. Hence come doubts on this head—inquiries—attempts to prove the doctrine—a denial of it. There seems an antithesis between instinct and understanding. The *reasoning* of men is then against it; but when an accident drives them to somewhat more fundamental than processes of logic, the instinctive belief does its work. Here, then, are three distinct things: a *belief* in a future and immortal state; a *definite conception* of that state; and a

proof of the fact of a future and immortal state. The two latter may be fluctuating and inadequate, while the former remains secure.

Now it may be considered as pretty well fixed, that all nations of the earth believe this doctrine; at least, the exceptions are so rare that they only confirm the rule. However, it is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, to determine the popular conception, and the influence of this belief at a particular time and place. But the subject demands a more special and detailed examination. Let us look at the opinion of the ancients.

I. *Opinion of the Hebrews respecting a Future State.*

It has by some been taught that this doctrine was perfectly understood, even by the Patriarchs; while by others it has been declared altogether foreign to the Old Testament. Both statements are incorrect. In some parts of the Hebrew Scriptures we find rude notions of a future state, but a firm belief in it; in others doubt, and even denial thereof. In the early books, at least, it never appears as a motive. It has no sanction in the Law; no symbol in the Jewish worship. The soul was sometimes placed in the *blood*, as by Empedocles; sometimes in the *breath;* the heart, or the bowels, were sometimes considered as its seat.* The notion of immortality was indefinite in the early books; there are cloudy views of a subterranean world, which gradually acquire more distinctness;—the state of the departed is a gloomy, joyless consciousness; the servant is free from his master; the king has a shadowy grandeur.† The dead prophet can be called back to ad-

* Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 11; Deut. xii. 23. See Cicero, Tusc. Lib. I. ch. 9, 10.—Gen. ii. 7; Ps. civ. 29, *et al.*—Deut. xxxii. 46; Ps. xcv. 10; Ps. xvi. 7; Prov. xxiii. 16, *et al.*

† Gen. xxv. 8; xxxvii. 35; Num. xvi. 30, 33. In Job, Isaiah, and the Psalms, this becomes more definite. Job x. 21, xxxviii. 17.—Job. iii. 19; Isaiah xiv.; Ezek. xxxii.; 1 Sam. xxviii. See Homer, Od. XI.; Virgil, Æneid. VI.

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monish the living. Enoch and Elijah, like Ganymede with the Greeks, being favourites of the deity, are taken miraculously to him.* Others deny the doctrine of immortality with great plainness.†

After the return from exile, the doctrine appears more definitely. Ezekiel and the pseudo-Isaiah allude to a resurrection of the body, a notion which is perhaps of Zoroastrian origin—perhaps older than Zoroaster.‡ But it is only a doubtful immortality that is taught in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus; though in the Wisdom of Solomon, and in the fourth book of Maccabees it is set forth with great clearness. The second book of Maccabees teaches in the plainest terms the resurrection of all—the righteous to happiness, the wicked to shame; they will find their former friends, and resume their old pursuits.§ Nothing is plainer.

At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the body—a state of rewards and punishments; —some of them connected it with the common notion of the transmigration of souls—perhaps with that of preëxistence.‖ The Essenes, still more philosophically, taught the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of retribution,

* See also Ps. xvii. 15; lxxiii. 24. See the mistakes of Michaelis respecting this doctrine of immortality, in his Argumenta Immortalitate, ... ex Mose collecta, in his Syntagma, Comment. Vol. 1, p. 80, *et seq.* See his Notes on Lowth, p. 465, ed. Rosenmüller. Warburton founds his strange hypothesis on the opposite view. See, on this point, Bauer, Dicta Clara, Vol. II. § 56, *et seq.*; De Wette, *ubi sup.*, § 113, *et seq.*; Lessing, Beyträgen aus der Wolfenbüttelschen Bibliothek, Vol. IV. p. 484, *et seq.* See the moderate and judicious remarks of Knapp, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. § 149.

† Eccles. iii. 19–21; ix. 10.

‡ Ezek. xxxvii.; Isa. xxvi. 19. See Gesenius *in loco.*—Rhode, *ubi sup.*, p. 494; Nork, Mythen der alten Perser., 1835, p. 184, *et seq.*; Priestley, *ubi sup.*, § 23.

§ Wisd. i. 15, 16; ii. 22; iii. *et seq.*; v. 15; vi. 18. It is connected with a preëxistent state, viii. 19–20.—4 Macc. xv. 3; xvi. 25; xvii. 18, *et al.*; De Wette, *ubi sup.*—2 Macc. vii. 9, 11, 14, 23; xii. 43, *et seq.*; xv. 12, *et seq.*—See in Eichhorn, *ubi sup.*, Vol. IV. p. 653, *et seq.*, a valuable contribution to the History of this doctrine by Frisch. He makes an ingenious comparison of passages from the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. The same doctrine is taught in both.

‖ Acts xxiii. 6–8; xxiv. 15; Math. xxii. 24, *et seq.*; Mark xii. 19, *et seq.*—Josephus, Wars, II. 8, 14. Josephus may have added the Metempsychosis to suit the taste of his readers.

without the resurrection of the body. The soul is formed of the most subtile air, and is confined in the body as in a prison; death redeems it from a long bondage, and the living soul mounts upward rejoicing.* We find similar views in Philo.† Perhaps they were common in reflecting minds at the time of Christ, who always presupposes a belief in immortality. The Sadducees alone opposed it.

Such were the beginning and history of this dogma with the Jews. Its progress and formation are obvious.

II. *Of this Doctrine among the Heathen Nations.*

Among savage nations this belief is common. It appears in prayers and offerings for the dead — in the mode of burial. The savage American deposits in the tomb the bow and the pipe, the dress and the tomahawk, of the deceased warrior. The Scythian, the Goth, the Indian, and the half-barbarous Greek, burned or buried the horse or the servant, the wife or the captive, of a great man at his decease, that he might go down royally attended to the realm of shades. Metempsychosis—the deification of the dead—ceremonies in their honour—gifts left on their tombs—oaths confirmed in their name,—are all signs of this belief.‡ The Egyp-

* Josephus, Wars, II. 8, 11. Josephus himself seems to agree with this opinion, when he "talks like a philosopher" in his pretended speech, Wars, III. 8, 5. See Buddeus, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 1202, *et seq.*; Paulus, Memorabilia, Vol. II. p. 157, *et seq.*; and de Wette, *ubi sup.*, § 178, *et seq.*

† See also the views of Philo, De Somniis, p. 586; De Abrah., p. 385; De Mundi opif, p. 31. The soul is immortal by *nature*, not by *grace*. See Dähne, Geschichtliche Darstellung der Judischen, Alexand. Philosophie, &c., 1834, Vol. I. p. 330, *et seq.*, 405, 485, *et seq.*, who cites the above and other proof passages. Ritter, *ubi sup.*, Vol. IV. See Weizel on the primitive doctrine of immortality among the Christians, in Theol. Stud und Kritiken, for 1836, p. 957, *et seq.* Constant, Liv. IX. ch. vii., makes some just remarks on this subject. On the state of opinions in the time of Christ, see Gfrörer, Jahrhundert des Heils, 1838, Vol. II. ch. vii. Triglandius de Tribus Judæorum Sectis, in quo Serarii, Drusii, Scaligeri, Opuscula, etc., 1703, Vol. I. Part I. Lib. II. and III.; Part II. Lib. II.–IV.; and Scaliger's Animadversions; and the very valuable treatise of Leclerc, Prolegomena ad Hist. Eccl., Lib. I. ch. i.

‡ See Lafitau, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 387 *et seq.*, 410 *et seq.*, 420 *et seq.*, 444 *et seq.*, Vol. I. p. 359 *et seq.*, 407 *et seq.*; Catlin, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I.; Bancroft's Hist. Vol. III. ch. xxii.; Constant, Livre IX. ch. vii.; VIII. Livre II. ch. iv.

tians, the Gauls, and Scandinavians, spoke of death as the object of life. Lucan foolishly thinks the latter are brave because they believe in endless existence.

Each savage people has its place of souls. Death with them is not an extinction, but a change of life: the tomb is a sacred place; no expense is too great for the dead. Their picture of Heaven is earth embellished. At first, the next world is not a domain of moral justice; God has no tribunal of judgment. But with the advance of the present, the conception of a future state rises also. The Pawnees have but one place for all the departed; the Scandinavians have two, Nifleheim and Nastrond; the Persians seven; the Hindoos no less than twenty-four, for different degrees of merit.* With many savages, the good and evil become angels to bless, or demons to curse mankind.†

To come to the civilized states of antiquity — India, Egypt, Persia — we find the doctrine prevalent in the earliest time, even in the ages when Mythology takes the place of History. In India and Egypt it was most often connected with transmigration to other bodies. Herodotus says, the Egyptians first taught the doctrine.‡ But who knows? Pausanias is nearer the truth when he refers it to India,§ where it was taught before the birth of Philosophy in the West.‖ It begins with the beginning of the nations.

In Greece we find it in a rude form in Homer; connected with Metempsychosis in Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Phere-

* Constant, ibid.; Meiners, *ubi supra*, Vol. I. Book III. See Leroux, De l'Humanité, etc., Vol. II. p. 468, *et seq.*

† Meiners, p. 302, *et seq.*; Farmer on the Worship of Human Spirits, *passim*. I have mentioned a few books on this subject, which have furnished the facts on which the above conclusions rest. I can refer to books of Travels, Voyages in general, the Lettres Edifantes, descriptions of foreign countries, which furnish the facts in abundance. The works of Meiners, Constant, and Lafitau, are themselves but a compilation from these sources.

‡ Lib. II. chap. cxxiii. See Creutzer's note, in Bähr's edition.

§ The date of all things is uncertain in the East. I cannot pretend to chronological accuracy, but see Asiatic Researches, Vol. V. p. 360, VII. 310, VIII. 448, *et seq.*; Priestley, *ubi sup.*, § 23; Ritter, Vol. I. p. 132.

‖ Stanley's History of Philosophy, Part XIII. sec. 2. chap. x.; Hyde, *ubi supra*.

cydes; assuming a new form in Sophocles and Pindar, and becoming a doctrine fixed and settled with Socrates, Plato, and his school in general. In Homer the future state is a joyless existence: Achilles would rather be king of earthly men for a day, than of spirits for ever. Like the future state of the Jews, it offers no motive, and presents no terror; the shades of the weary came together from all lands into their dim sojourn; — enemies forgot their strife, but friends were joined.* The present life is obscurely renewed in the next world; but the more especial friends or foes of the Gods are raised to honour, or condemned to shame. The transmigration of souls is perhaps derived from the wondrous mutations in the vegetable and animal world, where an acorn unswathed becomes an oak, and an egg discloses an eagle.†

In Hesiod, the condition of the dead is improved with the advance of the nation: the good have a place in the isles of the blest.‡ In the later poets, the doctrine rises still higher, while the form is not always definite.§ Pindar celebrates the condition of the Good in the next life: it is a state where the righteous are rewarded, and the wicked punished until sin is consumed from their nature, when they come to the divine abode.‖

* See Iliad, XXIII. *et seq. et al.*; Odyss. XI. *passim*; and Heyne, Excursus on Iliad, XXIII. 71 and 104; Vol. VIII. p. 368, *et seq.* See the similar views of the North-American Indians, in Schoolcraft's Algic Researches; Wachsmuth, Vol. II. Part II. p. 106, 244, 290; Potter, Antiquities; Görre's Mythengeschichte, *passim.*

† See Xenophon, Memorab., ed. Schneider, 1829, Lib. I. chap. iii. § 7, and the Note of Börnemann.

‡ Opera et Dies, vs. 160, *et seq.*, and the Scolia in Poet. Min., ed. Gaisford, Vol. II. p. 142, *et seq.*

§ See the Gnomic poets in general, for the moral views of life; for the immortality of the soul, Simonides, Frag. XXX. (XXXIII.); Tyrtæus, III. In Gaisford, Vol. III. p. 160, 242. See Orpheus, as cited by Lobeck, Aglaoph. p. 950. See Cudworth, chap. i. § 21, 22; and Mosheim *in loc.* See the indifferent book of Priestley, Heathen Philosophy, Part I. § 6, 5; Part II. § 3, 5; also p. 125 *et seq.*, 197 *et seq.*, 265 *et seq.*

‖ Olymp. II. vs. 104, *et seq.* (57–92, in Dissen.) See Cowley's wild imitation in his Pindarique Odes, Lond. 1720, Vol. II. p. 160, *et seq.* See similar thoughts in Propertius, Lib. III. 39, *et seq.*; and Tibullus, Eleg. III. 58; Virgil, Æneid, VI. See also Pindar's Fragment II. Vol. III. p. 34, ed. Heyne, Leipz. 1817; Frag. III. p. 36; Frag. I.

To pass from the Poets to the Philosophers. The Immortality of the Soul was taught continually, from Pherecydes to Plotinus. There were those who doubted, and some that denied; yet it was defended by all the greatest philosophers, Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, Epictetus,* and by the most influential schools. No doubt it was often connected with absurd notions, in jest or earnest. But when or where has its fate been different? Bishop Warburton thinks it no part of natural Religion; Dodwell thinks immortality is only coextensive with Christian baptism, and is superinduced upon the mortal soul by that dispensation of water. Could a Heathen be more absurd? If the popular doctrine of the Christian church, which dooms the mass of men to endless misery, be true, then were immortality a misfortuue to the race. The wisest of the Heathen taught endless misery as little as did Jesus of Nazareth. We must always separate the doctrine from its proof and its form; the latter is often imperfect while the doctrine is true.

p. 31, *et seq.*; and the Notes of Dissen, in his edition of Pindar, Vol. II. p. 648, *et seq.*; and Lobeck, *ubi sup.* See, who will, a treatise in the Acta Eruditorum for August 1722, De Statu Animæ separatæ post Mortem, &c.

* Cicero, Tusc. Lib. I. chap. xvi., says Pherecydes was the first who taught this doctrine. See also Diogenes Laert. Thales, Lib. I. § 43, p. 27, *et seq.*; and Plutarch, De Placitis; Phil. Lib. IV. ch. ii-vii.; Opp. Vol. II. p. 898, *et seq.* It has been thought doubtful if Aristotle believed in immortality, and perhaps it is not easy to *prove* this point. See De Anima, III. 5; but compare Ethic. Nicom. Lib. III. chap. vi., which denies it. See again De Anima, II. 2; De Gen. Anim. II. 4. Plato teaches immortality with the greatest clearness. See the Phædo, *passim*; Apolog. Laws (if they are genuine), Lib. X. XII.; Epinomis, Timæus, Rep. X. p. 117. Plato makes the *essence* of man purely spiritual: Tim. p. 69, C. *et seq.*, 72, D. *et seq.*; Rep. IV. p. 431, A. He was opposed to the Materialists; Soph. p. 246, A. However, he did not condemn the body. His *argument* in favour of immortality, like many later arguments on the same theme, creates more questions than it answers. The *form* of the doctrine, its connection with *preëxistence* and *transmigration*, like many doctrines still popularly connected with it, serve only to disfigure the doctrine itself, and bring it into reproach. The opinion of Cicero is so well known, that it is almost superfluous to cite passages; but see Tusc., X. Lib. I.; De Senectute, chap. xxi., *et seq.*; Somnium Scipionis, *et al.* See Seneca, De Ira, I. 3; Consolatio ad Helv., chap. vi.; De Vita Beata, chap. xxxii.; Ep. 50, 102, 117. Sometimes he speaks decidedly, at other times with doubt. See Lipsius, Physiol. Stoic. Lib. III., Diss. VIII.-XIX. See Locke, Essay, Book IV. chap. iii., and Letters to the Bishop of Worcester.

Since the time of Bishop Warburton, it has been common to deny that the Heathen were acquainted with this doctrine.* "It was one guess among many," has often been said. But a man even slightly acquainted with ancient thought and life, knows it is not so. God has not made truth so hard to come at, that the world of men continued four thousand years in ignorance of a future life. Before the time above named, it was taught by scholars, even scholars of the clerical order, that the doctrine was well known to the heathen. Cudworth and More, Wilkins, Taylor, and Wollaston, to mention only the most obvious names, bear testimony to the fact.†

To sum up in a few words the history of this doctrine, both among Jews and Gentiles: It seems that rude nations, like the Celts and the Sarmatians, clung instinctively to the sentiment of immortality; that the doctrine was well known to the philosophers, and commonly accepted; that some doubted, and some denied it altogether. A few had reached an eminence in philosophy, and could demonstrate in their way the proposition, and satisfy their logical doubt, thus reconciling the instinctive and the reflective faculty. From the first book of Moses to the last of Maccabees, from

* Warburton has the merit of framing an hypothesis so completely original, that no one (except Bishop Hurd) has ever shared it in full with him. Part of his singular theory is this: A belief in a future state was found necessary, *in Heathen countries*, to keep the subjects in order; the philosophers and priests got up a doctrine for that purpose, teaching that the soul was immortal, but not believing a word of it. *Moses, who believed the doctrine, yet never taught it, but controlled the people by means of his inspiration, and the perfect Law.*

† See Cudworth and More, *passim;* Wilkins, Principles and Duties of Natural Religion, &c., Book I. chap. xi.; see also ch. iv. and viii.; Taylor's Sermon, preached at the Funeral of that worthy Knight, Sir George Dalston, &c.; Wollaston, Religion of Nature, sect. ix. It would be easy to cite passages from the early Christians, testifying to the truth possessed by the Heathens B. C. I will mention but one from Minucius Felix — "A man might judge either that the present Christians are philosophers, or else that the old philosophers were Christians." See likewise Brougham's Discourse on Natural Theology, Note vi.–ix. in Appendix. Polybius, *ubi supra*, VI. ch. 54–55, thinks the legislators got up the doctrine, with no faith in I, except a general belief that it would make men submissive. See Timæus, De Anima Mundi.

Homer to Cicero, there is a great change in the form of the doctrine. All other forms also had changed.

But how far was the doctrine diffused among the people? We can tell but faintly from history. But what nature demands, and Providence affords, lingers longest in the bosoms of the mass of men. The doctrine was not strange to the fishermen of Galilee: was it more so to the peasants of Greece?* The early Apologists of Christianity found no difficulty from the unity of God and the immortality of the soul; both are presupposed by Jesus and Paul. How far it moved men in common life, can be told neither from the courtiers of pagan Cæsar Augustus, nor from those of christian Louis the Well-beloved. A Roman, and a Christian Pontiff,—how much are they moved by the tardy terrors of future judgment? Juvenal could repeat his biting sneer in more ages than one.† Was the argument of the Pagan philosopher unsatisfactory? It was never otherwise. Mr. Strauss declares it has not yet been demonstrated; Mr. Locke, that it cannot be proved. The sentiment does its work with few words. Who shall demonstrate for us a fact of consciousness, or prove our personal identity? But the doctrine was connected with gross errors — preëxistence and metempsychosis. Has the doctrine ever been free of such connection in more than a single historical case? It does not appear. The doctrine of inherited sin, of depravity born in the bones of men; the notion that the mass of men are doomed by the God of Mercy to eternal woe—immortal only to be wretched—is not a strange thing in the nineteenth century, though perhaps unheard of in the first. Modern savages have foul notions of God; ancient civiliza-

* *The resurrection of the body* seems to have been the doctrine that offended Paul's hearers at Athens: that of *immortality* alone was well known to the Stoics (some of whom believed it), and to the Epicureans, who rejected it. Acts xvii. 16, *et seq.* See Wetstein *in loc.*

† See Horace, Epist. Lib. I. Ep. XVI.; Juvenal, Satir. XIII.; Persius, Satir. II. How far do these express the popular sentiment?—Juvenal, Satir. II. 149, *et seq.*

tion has sins enough on its head—hideous sins, unknown even in our day, for the world has been worse; but both are free from such a stain.*

* Leclerc, *ubi sup.*, gives a bird's-eye view of the state of the world at the commencement of the Christian period, perhaps the most faithful that has been given of manners and opinions. The popular mythology was in about the same estimation among cultivated men as the popular theology at the present time with men of piety and good sense. Leroux, de l'Humanité, Vol. I. p. 302, *et seq.*, makes some observations on this doctrine among the ancients, not without interest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT ON LIFE.

MAN is not a being of isolated faculties, which act independently. The religious, like each other element in us, acts jointly with other powers; its action therefore is helped or hindered by them. The Idea of Religion is only realized by an harmonious action of all the faculties, the intellectual and the moral. Yet the religious sentiment must act, more or less, though the understanding be not cultivated, and the moral elements sleep in Egyptian night; in connection therefore with Wisdom or Folly, with Hope or Fear, with Love or Hate. Now in all periods of human history, Religion demands something of her votaries: the ruder their condition, the more capricious and unreasonable is the demand. Though Religion itself be ever the same, the form of its expression varies with man's intellectual and moral state. Its influence on life may be considered under its three different manifestations.

I. OF SUPERSTITION.

Combining with Ignorance and Fear, the religious sentiment leads to Superstition. This is the vilification and debasement of man. It may be defined as FEAR BEFORE GOD. Plutarch, though himself religious, pronounced it worse than Atheism. But the latter cannot exist to the same ex-

tent—is never an active principle. Superstition is a morbid state of human nature, where the conditions of the religious sentiment are not fulfilled—where its functions are impeded and counteracted. But it must act, as the heart beats in the frenzy of a fever. It has been said with truth, "Perfect love casts out fear." The converse is quite as true: perfect fear casts out Love. The superstitious man begins by fearing God, not loving him. He goes on, like a timid boy in the darkness, by projecting his own conceptions out of himself; conjuring up a phantom he calls his God—a Deity capricious, cruel, revengeful, lying in wait for the unwary—a God ugly, morose, and only to be feared. He ends by paying a service meet for such a God, the service of Horror and Fear. Each man's *conception* of God is his conception of a man carried out to infinity; the pure idea is eclipsed by a human personality. This conception therefore varies as the men who form it vary. It is the index of their Soul. The superstitious man projects out of himself a creation begotten of his Folly and his Fear; calls the the furious phantom God, Moloch, Jehovah; then attempts to please the capricious Being he has conjured up. To do this, the demands his Superstition makes are, not to keep the laws which the one God wrote on the walls of man's being, but to do arbitrary acts which this fancied God demands: he must give up to the deity what is dearest to himself. Hence the savage offers a sacrifice of favourite articles of food; the first fruits of the chase, or agriculture; weapons of war which have done signal service; the nobler animals; the skins of rare beasts. He conceives the anger of his God may be soothed, like man's excited frame, by libations, incense, the smoke of plants, the steam of a sacrifice.

Again, the superstitious man would appease his God by unnatural personal service. He undertakes an enterprise almost impossible,—and succeeds, for the fire of his purpose subdues and softens the rock that opposes him.

He submits to painful privation of food, rest, clothing; leads a life of solitude; wears a comfortless dress, that girds and frets the very flesh; stands in a painful position; shuts himself in a dungeon; lives in a cave; stands on a pillar's top; goes unshorn and filthy;—he exposes himself to be scorched by the sun, and frozen by the frost;—he lacerates his flesh; punctures his skin to receive sacred figures of the Gods;—he mutilates his body, cutting off the most useful or most sacred members;—he sacrifices his cattle, his enemies, his children; defiles the sacred temple of his body; destroys his mortal life to serve his God. In a state more refined, Superstition demands abstinence from all the sensual goods of life. Its present pleasures are a godless thing. The flesh is damned. To serve God, is to mortify the appetites God gave. Then the superstitious man abstains from comfortable food, clothing, and shelter; comes neither eating nor drinking; watches all night, absorbed in holy vigils. The man of God must be thin and spare. Bernard has but to show his neck, fleshless and scraggy, to be confessed a mighty saint. Above all, he must abstain from marriage;—the Devil lurks under the bridal rose—the vow of the celibate can send him howling back to hell. The smothered volcano is grateful to God. Then comes the assumption of arbitrary vows; the performance of pilgrimages to distant places, thinly clad and barefoot; the repetition of prayers, not as a delight, spontaneously poured out, but as a penance, or work of supererogation. In this stage, Superstition builds convents, monasteries; sends Anthony to his dwelling in the desert; founds orders of Mendicants, Rechabites, Nazarites, Encratites, Pilgrims, Flagellants, and similar Moss-troopers of Religion, whom Heaven yet turns to good account. This is the Superstition of the flesh: it promises the favour of its God on condition of these most useless and arbitrary acts; it dwells on the absurdest of externals.

However, in a later day, it goes to still more subtle refinements. The man does not mutilate his body, nor give

up the most sacred of his material possessions: that was the Superstition of savage life. But he mutilates his soul; gives up the most sacred of his spiritual treasures: this is the Superstition of refined life. Here the man is ready to forego Reason, Conscience, and Love, God's most precious gifts—the noblest attributes of man—the tie that softly joins him to the eternal world. He will think against Reason, decide against Conscience, act against Love, because he dreams the God of Reason, Conscience, and Love, demands it. It is a slight thing to hack and mutilate the body, though it be the fairest temple God ever made, and to mar its completeness a sin; but to dismember the soul, the very image of God—to lop off the most sacred affections—to call Reason a Liar, Conscience a devil's-oracle, and cast Love clean out from the heart,—this is the last triumph of Superstition, but one often witnessed, in all the three forms of Religion—Fetichism, Polytheism, Monotheism; in all ages before Christ—in all ages after Christ. This is the Superstition of the Soul. The one might be the Superstition of the Hero; this is the Superstition of the Pharisee.

A man rude in spirit must have a rude conception of God: he thinks the Deity like himself. If a Buffalo had a religion, his conception of Deity would probably be a Buffalo, fairer limbed, stronger and swifter than himself, grazing in the fairest meadows of Heaven. If he were superstitious, his service would consist in offerings of grass, of water, of salt; perhaps in abstinence from the pleasures, comforts, necessities of a bison's life. His Devil also would be a Buffalo, but of another colour, lean, vicious and ugly. Now when a man has these rude conceptions, inseparable from a rude state, offerings and sacrifice are natural: when they come spontaneous, as the expression of a grateful or a penitent heart, the seal of a resolution, the sign of Faith, Hope, and Love, as an outward symbol which strengthens the indwelling sentiment,—the sacrifice is pleasant, and may be beautiful. The child who saw God in the swelling and

rounded clouds of a June day, and left on a rock the ribbon-grass and garden roses as mute symbols of gratitude to the Great Spirit who poured out the voluptuous season; the ancient pagan who bowed prone to the dust in homage, as the sun looked out from the windows of morning, or offered the smoke of incense at nightfall in gratitude for the day, or kissed his hand to the Moon, thankful for that spectacle of loveliness passing above him; the man who with reverent thankfulness or penitence offers a sacrifice of joy or grief, to express what words too poorly tell,—he is no idolater, but Nature's simple child. We rejoice in self-denial for a father, a son, a friend. Love, and every strong emotion, has its sacrifice: it is rooted deep in the heart of man. God needs nothing: he cannot receive; yet man needs to give. But if these things are done as substitutes for holiness—as *causes*, and not mere *signs* of reconciliation with God—as means to coax and wheedle the Deity and bribe the All-Powerful, —it is Superstition, rank and odious. Examples enough of this are found in all ages. To take two of the most celebrated cases—one from the Hebrews, the other from a Heathen people. Abraham would sacrifice his son to Jehovah, who demanded that offering,*—Agamemnon his daughter, to angry Diana. But a Deity kindly interferes in both cases. The Angel of Jehovah rescues Isaac from the remorseless knife; a ram is found for a sacrifice. Diana delivers the daughter of Agamemnon, and leaves a hind in her place. No one doubts that the latter is a case of superstition most ghastly and terrible. A father murder his own child!—a human sacrifice to the Lord of Life! It is rebellion against Conscience, Reason, Affection—treason against God,—though

* Gen. xxii. 1-14. The conjectures of the learned about this mythical legend, which may have some fact at its foundation, are numerous, and some of them remarkable for their ingenuity. Some one supposes that Abraham was tempted by the *Elohim*, but *Jehovah* prevents the sacrifice. It is easy to find other Heathen parallels; that of Cronus in Eusebius, P. E. I. 10; of Aristodemus, of which Pausanias tells a curious story, IV. 9. See the case of Helena and Valeria Luperca, who were both miraculously saved from sacrifice, in Plutarch, Paralel. Opp. Vol. II. p. 314.

Calchas, the anointed minister, declared it the will of Heaven. There is an older than Calchas who says, "It is a Lie." He that defends the former patriarch, counting it a blameless and beautiful act of piety and faith performed at the command of God,—what shall be said of him? He proves that the worm of Superstition is not yet dead, nor its fire quenched, and leads weak men to ask, "Which then has most of Religion—the Christian, who justifies Abraham, or the Pagan Greeks, who condemned Agamemnon?" He leads *weak* men to ask: the strong make no question of so plain a matter.

But why go back to Patriarchs at Aulis or Moriah; do we not live in New England and the nineteenth century?—have the footsteps of Superstition been effaced from our land? Our books of theology are full thereof; our churches and homes not empty of it. When a man fears God more than he loves him; when he will forsake Reason, Conscience, Love—the still small voice of God in the heart—for any of the legion voices of Authority, Tradition, Expediency, which come of Ignorance, Selfishness, and Sin; whenever he hopes, by a poor prayer, or a listless attendance at church, or an austere observance of Sabbaths and Fast-days, a compliance with forms; when he hopes, by professing with his tongue the doctrine he cannot believe in his heart, to atone for wicked actions, wrong thoughts, unholy feelings, a six-days' life of meanness, deception, rottenness and sin,—then is he superstitious. Are there no fires but those of Moloch?—no idols of printed paper, and spoken wind?—no false worship but bowing the knee to Baal, Adonis, Priapus, or Cybele? Superstition changes its *forms*, not its substance. If he were superstitious who in days of ignorance but made his son's body pass through the fire to his God, what shall be said of those who in an age of light systematically degrade the fairest gifts of man, God's dearest benefaction?—who make life darkness, death despair, the world a desert, man a worm, nothing but a worm, and God an ugly fiend,

who made the mass of men for utter wretchedness, death, and eternal hell? Alas for them!—they are blind and see not; they lie down in their folly. Let Charity cover them up!

II. OF FANATICISM.

There is another morbid state of the religious sentiment: it consists in its union with Hatred and other malignant elements of man. Here it leads to Fanaticism. As the essence of Superstition is Fear coupled with religious feeling, so the essence of Fanaticism is Malice mingling with that sentiment. It may be called HATRED BEFORE GOD. The Superstitious man fears lest God hate him; the Fanatic thinks he hates not him but his enemies. Is the Fanatic a Jew?—the Gentiles are hateful to Jehovah;—a Mahometan?—all are infidel dogs who do not bow to the prophet; their end is destruction. Is he a Christian?—he counts all others as Heathens, whom God will damn—of this or that sect?—he condemns all the rest for their belief, let their life be divine as the prayer of a saint. Out of his selfish passion he creates him a God—breathes into it the breath of his Hatred; he worships and prays to it, and says, "Deliver me, for thou art my God!" Then he feels—so he fancies—inspiration to visit his foes with divine vengeance. He can curse and smite them in the name of his God. It is the sword of the Lord, and the fire of the Most High, that drinks up the blood and stifles the groan of the wretched.

Like Superstition, it is found in all ages of the world. It is the insanity of mankind. As the richest soils grow the weightiest harvests, or the most noxious weeds and the most baneful poisons; as the strongest bodies take disease the most sorely; so the deepest natures, the highest forms of religion, when once infected with this leprosy, go to the wildest excesses of desperation. Thus the fanaticism of the worshippers of one God has no parallel among idolaters and polytheists. There is a point in human nature where moral

distinctions do not appear, as on the earth there are spots where the compass will not traverse, and dens where the sun never shines. This fact is little dwelt on by philosophers; still it is a fact. Seen from this point, Right and Wrong lose their distinctive character, and run into each other; Good seems Evil, and Evil Good, or both are the same. The sophistry of the Understanding sometimes leagues with appetite, and gradually entices the thoughtless into this pit. The Antinomian of all times turns in thither, to increase his *faith* and diminish his *works*. It is the very cave of Trophonius: he that enters loses his manhood, and walks backward as he returns—his soul so filled with God, that whatever the flesh does, he thinks cannot be wrong, though it break all laws, human and divine. The fanatic dwells continually in this state. God demands of him to persecute his foes: the thought troubles him by day, and stares on him as a spectre at night. God, or his angel, appears to his crazed fancy, and bids him to the work with promise of reward, or spurs him with a curse. Then there is no lie too malignant for him to invent and utter; no curse too awful for him to imprecate; no refinement of torture too cruel or exquisitely rending for his fancy to devise, his malice to inflict; Nature is teased for new tortures—Art is racked to extort fresh engines of cruelty. As the jaded Roman offered a reward for the invention of a new pleasure, so the fanatic would renounce Heaven, could he give an added pang to Hell.

Men of this character have played so great a part in the world's history, that they must not be passed over in silence. The ashes of the innocents they have burned, are sown broad-cast and abundant in all lands: the earth is quick with this living dust. The blood of prophets and saviours they have shed, still cries for justice. The Canaanites, the Jews, the Saracen, the Christian, Polytheist, and Idolater—New Zealand and New England—are guilty of this. Let the early Christian, or the lingering Heathen, tell his tale;

let the voice of the Heretic speak from the dungeon-racks of the Inquisition; that of the "true believer" from the scaffolds of Elizabeth—most Christian Queen; let the voices of the murdered come up from the squares of Paris, the plains of the Low Countries, from the streets of Antioch, Byzantium, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Damascus, Rome, Mexico—from the wheels, racks, and gibbets of the world; let the men who died in religious wars, always the bloodiest and most remorseless—the women, whom nothing could save from a fate yet more awful—the babes, newly born, who perished in the sack and conflagration of idolatrous and heretical cities, when for the sake of Religion men violated its every precept, and in the name of God broke down his Law, and trampled his image into bloody dust;—let all these speak, to admonish, and to blame.

But it is not well to rest on general terms alone. Paul had no little fanaticism, when he persecuted the Christians —kept the garments of the men who stoned Stephen. Moses had much of it, if, as the story goes, he commanded the extirpation of nations of idolaters, millions of men, virtuous as the Jews. Joshua, Samuel, David, had much of it, and executed schemes as bloody as a murderer's most sanguine dream. It has been both the foe and the auxiliary of the Christian church. There is a long line of Fanatics, extending from the time of Justin, reaching from century to century, marching on from age to age, with the banner of the Cross over their heads, and the Gospel on their tongues, and fire and sword in their hands. The last of that Apocalyptic rabble has not yet passed by—Let the clouds of darkness hide them! What need to tell of our own fathers?—what they suffered—what they inflicted? Their crime is fresh and unatoned. Rather let us take the wings of an angel, and flee away from scenes so awful, the slaughter-house of souls!

But the milder forms of Fanaticism we cannot escape: they meet us in the theological war of extermination, in

which sect now wars with sect, pulpit with pulpit, man with man. If one would seek specimens of Superstition in its milder form, let him open a popular commentary on the Bible, or read much of that weakish matter which circulates in what men call, as if in mockery, good pious books. If he would find Fanaticism in its modern and more Pharisaic shape, let him open the "religious" newspapers, or read theological polemics. To what mean uses may we not descend! The spirit of a Caligula and a Dominic—of an Alva and Ignatius, stares at men in the street;—it can only bay in the distance; it dares not bite. Poor craven Fanaticism! fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again! Like Pope and Pagan in the story, he sits chained by the way-side, to grin and gibber, and howl and snarl, as the Pilgrim goes by, singing the song of the fearless and free, on the highway to Heaven, with his girdle about him, and his white robe on. Poor Fanaticism, who was drunk with the blood of the saints, and in his debauch lifted his horn, and pushed at the Almighty, and slew the children of God,—he shall revel but in the dreamy remembrance of his ancient crime; his teeth shall be fleshed no more in the limbs of the living.

These two morbid states, just past over, represent the most hideous forms of human degradation;—where the foulest passions are at their foulest work; where Malice, which a Devil might envy, but which might make Hell darker with its frown—where Hate and Rancour build up their organizations, and ply their arts. In man there is a mixture of good and evil: "A being darkly wise and rudely great," he has in him somewhat of the Angel and something of the Devil. In Fanaticism, the Angel sleeps and the Devil drives. But let us leave the hateful theme.*

* A powerful priesthood has usually had great influence in promoting fanaticism of the most desperate character. One need only look over the history of persecutions in all ages, to see this. We see it among the Hebrews, the Germans, the Druids—the nations that opposed the spread of Christianity. The Christian church itself has

III. OF SOLID PIETY.

The legitimate and perfect action of the religious sentiment takes place when it exists in harmonious combination with Reason, Conscience, and Affection. Then it is not Hatred, and not Fear, but LOVE BEFORE GOD. It produces the most beautiful development of human nature—the golden age—the fairest Eden of life—the kingdom of Heaven. Its Deity is the God of Love, within whose encircling arms it is beautiful to be. The demands it makes are,—to keep the Law he has written in the heart, to be good, to do good; to love man, to love God. It may use forms, prayers, dogmas, ceremonies, priests, temples, sabbaths, festivals and fasts; yes, sacrifices if it will, as means, not ends—symbols of a sentiment, not substitutes for it. Its substance is love of God—its form love of man; its temple a pure heart—its sacrifice a divine life. The end it proposes is,—to reunite the man with God, till he thinks God's thought, which is Truth—feels God's feeling, which is Love—wills God's will, which is the eternal Right; thus finding God in the sense wherein he is not far from any one of us; becoming one with him, and so partaking the divine nature. The means to this high end are,—an extinction of all in man that opposes God's law, a perfect obedience to him as he speaks in Reason, Conscience, Affection. It leads through active obedience to an absolute trust, a perfect love—to the complete harmony of the finite man with the infinite God; and man's will coalesces in that of Him who is All in All. Then Faith and Knowledge are the same thing; Reason and Revelation do not conflict; Desire and Duty go hand in hand, and strew man's path with flowers: Desire has become dutiful, and Duty desirable. The divine spirit incarnates

erected monuments enough to perpetuate the fact. The story of Haman and Mordecai is no bad allegory of the conflict between the orthodox priesthood and the unorganized heretics.

itself in the man—the riddle of the world is solved. Perfect love casts out fear. Then Religion demands no particular actions, forms, or modes of thought: the man's plowing is holy as his prayer—his daily bread as the smoke of his sacrifice; his home sacred as his temple; his work-day and his sabbath are alike God's day. His priest is the holy spirit within him; Faith and Works his communion of both kinds. He does not sacrifice Reason to Religion, nor Religion to Reason: Brother and Sister, they dwell together in love. A life harmonious and beautiful, conducted by Righteousness, filled full with Truth, and enchanted by Love to man and God,—this is the service he pays to the Father of All. Belief does not take the place of Life. Capricious austerity atones for no duty left undone. He loves Religion as a bride, for her own sake, not for what she brings. He lies low in the hand of God,—the breath of the Father is on him.

If Joy comes to this man, he rejoices in its rosy light. His Wealth, his Wisdom, his Power, is not for himself alone, but for all God's children: nothing is his which a brother needs more than he. Like God himself, he is kind to the thankless and unmerciful. Purity without, and Piety within;—these are his Heaven, both present and to come. Is not his flesh as holy as his soul—his body a temple of God?

If trouble comes on him, which Prudence could not foresee, nor Strength overcome, nor Wisdom escape from, he bears it with a heart serene and full of peace. Over every gloomy cavern, and den of despair, Hope arches her rainbow; the ambrosial light descends. Religion shows him, that out of desert rocks, black and savage, where the Vulture has her home, where the Storm and the Avalanche are born, and whence they descend to crush and to kill,—out of these hopeless cliffs falls the river of Life, which flows for all, and makes glad the people of God. When the Storm and the Avalanche sweep from him all that is dear-

est to mortal hope, is he comfortless? Out of the hard marble of Life, the deposition of a few joys and many sorrows, of birth and death, and smiles and grief, he hews him the beautiful statue of religious Tranquillity. It stands ever beside him, with the smile of heavenly satisfaction on its lip, and its trusting finger pointing to the sky.

The true religious man, amid all the ills of time, keeps a serene forehead, and entertains a peaceful heart. Thus going out and coming in, amid all the trials of the city, the agony of the plague, the horrors of the thirty tyrants, the fierce democracy abroad, the fiercer ill at home,—the Saint, the Sage of Athens, was still the same. Such an one can endure hardness—can stand alone and be content; a rock amid the waves, lonely but not moved. Around him the few or the many may scream their screams, or cry their clamours, calumniate or blaspheme: what is it all to him, but the cawing of the sea-bird about that solitary and deep-rooted stone? So swarms of summer flies, and spiteful wasps, may assail the branches of an oak, which lifts its head, storm-tried and old, above the hills: they move a leaf, or bend a twig, by their united weight. Their noise, fitful and malicious, elsewhere might frighten the sheep in the meadows;—here it becomes a placid hum; it joins the wild whisper of the leaves; it swells the breezy music of the tree, but makes it bear no acorn less.

He fears no evil; God is his armour against fate. He rejoices in his trials,—and Jeremiah sings psalms in his dungeon, and Daniel prays three times a-day with his window up, that all may hear, and Nebuchadnezzar cast him to the lions if he will: Luther will go to the Diet at Worms, if it rain enemies for nine days running, "though the Devils be thick as the tiles on the roof." Martyred Stephen sees God in the clouds. The victim at the stake glories in the fire he lights, which shall shine all England through. Yes! Paul, an old man, forsaken of his friends, tried by many

perils, daily expecting an awful death, sits comforted in his dungeon. The Lord stands by and says, "Fear not, Paul; Lo, I am with thee to the world's end. The tranquil saint can say, "I know whom I have served. I have not the spirit of fear, but joy. I am ready to be sacrificed." Such trials prove the Soul as Gold is proved. The dross perishes in the fire; but the virgin metal — it comes brighter from the flame. What is it to such a man to be scourged, forsaken, his name a proverb, counted as the offscouring of the world? There is that in him which looks down millions. Cast out, he is not in dismay—forsaken, never less alone. Slowly and soft the Soul of Faith comes into the man. He knows that he is seen by the pure and terrible eyes of Infinity. He feels the sympathy of the Soul of All, and says, with modest triumph, "I am not alone, for Thou art with me." Mortal affections may cease their melody; but the Infinite speaks to his soul comfort too deep for words, and too divine. What if he have not the Sun of human affection to cheer him? The awful faces of the Stars look from the serene depths of divine Love, and seem to say, "Well done!" What if the sweet music of human sympathy vanish before the discordant curse of his brother man? The melody of the spheres—so sweet we heed it not when tried less sorely—rolls in upon the soul its tranquil tide, and that same Word which was in the beginning, says, "Thou art my beloved Son, and in thee am I well pleased." Earth is overcome, and Heaven won.

It is well for mankind that God now and then raises up a hero of the soul—exposes him to grim trials in the forefront of the battle—sustains him there, that we may know what nobility is in man, and how near him God; to show that greatness in the religious man is only needed to be found—that his Charity does not expire with the quiverings of his flesh—that this hero can end his breath with a "Father, forgive them!"

Man everywhere is the measure of man. There is nothing

which the Flesh and the Devil can inflict in their rage, but the Holy Spirit can bear in its exceeding peace. The Art of the tormentor is less than the Nature of the suffering soul. All the denunciations of all that sat in Moses' seat, or have since climbed to that of the Messiah—the scorn of the contemptuous, the fury of the passionate, the wrath of a monarch and the roar of his armies,—all these are to a religious soul but the buzzing of the flies about that mountain oak. There is nothing that prevails against Truth.

Now in some men Religion is a continual growth. They are always in harmony with God. Silently and unconscious, erect as a palm-tree, they grow up to the measure of a man. To them Reason and Religion are of the same birth. They are born saints — Aborigines of Heaven. Betwixt their Idea of Life, and their Fact of Life, there has at no time been a gulf. But others join themselves to the Armada of Sin, and get scarred all over with wounds as they do thankless battle in that leprous host. Before these men become religious, there must be a change—well defined, deeply marked—a change that will be remembered. The saints who have been sinners tell us of the struggle and desperate battle that goes on between the Flesh and the Spirit. It is as if the Devil and the Archangel contended. Well says John Bunyan, "The Devil fought with me weeks long, and I with the Devil." To take the leap of Niagara, and stop when half-way down, and by their proper motion reascend, is no slight thing, nor the remembrance thereof like to pass away.

This passage from sin to salvation—this second birth of the Soul, as both Christians and Heathens call it,—is one of the many mysteries of man. Two elements meet in the soul: there is a negation of the past; an affirmation of the future. Terror and Hope, Penitence and Faith, rush together in that moment, and a new life begins. The character gradually grows over the wounds of sin. With bleeding

feet the man retreads his way, but gains at last the mountain-top of Life, and wonders at the tortuous track he left behind.

Shall it be said that Religion is the great refinement of the world—its tranquil star that never sets? Need it be told that all nature works in its behalf—that every mute and every living thing seems to repeat God's voice, Be perfect?—that Nature, which is the *out-ness* of God, favours Religion, which is the *in-ness* of man, and so God works with us? Heathens knew it many centuries ago. It has long been known that Religion—in its true estate—created the deepest welfare of man. Socrates, Seneca, Plutarch, Antoninus, Fenelon—can tell us this. It might well be so. Religion comes from what is strongest, deepest, most beautiful and divine; lays no rude hand on soul or sense; condemns no faculty as base. It sets no bounds to Reason but Truth—none to Affection but Love—none to Desire but Duty—none to the Soul but Perfection; and these are not limits, but the charter of infinite freedom.

No doubt there is joy in the success of earthly schemes. There is joy to the miser as he satiates his prurient palm with gold; there is joy for the fool of fortune when his gaming brings a prize. But what is it? His request is granted; but leanness enters his soul. There is delight in feasting on the bounties of Earth, the garment in which God veils the brightness of his face; in being filled with the fragrant loveliness of flowers, the song of birds, the hum of bees, the sounds of ocean; the rustle of the summer wind, heard at evening in the pine tops; in the cool running brooks, in the majestic sweep of undulating hills, the grandeur of untamed forests, the majesty of the mountain; in the morning's virgin beauty, in the maternal grace of evening, and the sublime and mystic pomp of night:—Nature's silent sympathy—how beautiful it is!

There is joy—no doubt there is joy—to the mind of Genius, when thought bursts on him as the tropic sun rend-

ing a cloud; when long trains of ideas sweep through his soul, like constellated orbs before an angel's eye; when sublime thoughts and burning words rush to the heart; when Nature unveils her secret truth, and some great Law breaks, all at once, upon a Newton's mind, and Chaos ends in light; when the hour of his inspiration and the joy of his genius is on him, 't is then that this child of Heaven feels a god-like delight;—'t is sympathy with Truth.

There is a higher and more tranquil bliss, when heart communes with heart; when two souls unite in one, like mingling dewdrops on a rose, that scarcely touch the flower, but mirror the heavens in their little orbs; when perfect love transforms two souls, either man's or woman's, each to the other's image; when one heart beats in two bosoms—one spirit speaks with a divided tongue; when the same soul is eloquent in mutual eyes,—there is a rapture deep, serene, heartfelt, and abiding, in this mysterious fellow-feeling with a congenial soul, which puts to shame the cold sympathy of Nature, and the ecstatic but short-lived bliss of Genius in his high and burning hour.

But the welfare of Religion is more than each or all of these. The glad reliance that comes upon the man; the sense of trust; a rest with God; the soul's exceeding peace; the universal harmony; the infinite within; sympathy with the soul of All,—is bliss that words cannot pourtray. He only knows, who feels;—the speech of a prophet cannot tell the tale—No, not if a seraph touched his lips with fire. In the high hour of religious visitation from the living God, there seems to be no separate thought; the tide of universal life sets through the soul. The thought of self is gone; it is a little accident to be a king or a clown, a parent or a child. Man is at one with God, and He is All in All. Neither the loveliness of nature—neither the joy of genius, nor the sweet breathing of congenial hearts, that make delicious music as they beat,—neither one nor all of these can equal the joy of the religious soul that is at one with God, so full

of peace that prayer is needless. This deeper joy gives an added charm to the former blessings;—nature undergoes a new transformation. A story tells that when the rising sun fell on Memnon's statue it wakened music in that breast of stone. Religion does the same with nature. From the shining snake to the waterfall, it is all eloquent of God. As to John in the Apocalypse, there stands an angel in the sun; the seraphim hang over every flower; God speaks in each little grass that fringes a mountain rock. Then even Genius is wedded to a greater bliss,—his thoughts shine more brilliant, when set in the light of Religion. Friendship and Love it renders infinite. The man loves God when he but loves his friend. This is the joy Religion gives—its perennial rest—its everlasting life. It comes not by chance;—it is the possession of such as ask and toil and toil and ask. It is withheld from none, as other gifts. Nature tells little to the deaf, the blind, the rude. Every man is not a genius, and has not his joy. Few men can find a friend that is the world to them. That triune sympathy is not for every one. But this welfare of Religion—the deepest, truest, the everlasting, the sympathy with God, lies within the reach of all his Sons.

BOOK II.

"Reason is natural Revelation, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties. Revelation is natural Reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries, communicated by God immediately, which Reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. So that he that takes away Reason, to make way for Revelation, puts out the light of both, and does much-what the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope."—LOCKE, *Essays*, Book IV. chap. xix. § 4.

BOOK II.

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT TO GOD, OR A DISCOURSE OF INSPIRATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE IDEA AND CONCEPTION OF GOD.

Two things are necessary to render Religion possible; namely, a religious nature in man, and God out of man as the object of that religious nature. The existence of these two facts admitted, Religion follows necessarily, as vision from the existence of a seeing faculty in man, and that of light out of him. Now the existence of the religious element, as it was said before, implies its object. We have naturally a Sentiment of God. Reason gives us an Idea of Him. These are founded in our nature, and are in themselves unchangeable—always the same. But to these we superadd a Conception of him. Can this conception be adequate? Certainly not. The Idea of God, as the Infinite, may exhaust the most transcendent Imagination; it is the highest Idea of which man is capable. But is God to be measured by our Idea?—shall the finite circumscribe the Infinite? The existence of God is so plainly and deeply writ both in us and out of us—in what we are, and what we experience,—that the humblest and the loftiest minds may be satisfied of this reality, and may know that there is an absolute Cause, a Ground of all things—the Infinite of Power, Wisdom, Love, whereon we may repose, wherein we

may confide. This conclusion comes alike from the spontaneous sentiment, and premeditated reflection—from the intuition of Reason, and the process of Reasoning. This Idea of God is clear and distinct—not to be confounded with any other idea.

But when we attempt to go farther,—to give a logical description of Deity, its nature and essence; to define and classify its attributes; to make a conception of God as of the finite objects of the senses or the understanding,—then we have nothing but our own subjective notions, which do not, of necessity, have an objective reality corresponding thereto. All men may know God as the Infinite;—His nature and essence are past finding out. But we know God only in part—from the manifestations of Divinity, *seen* in nature, *felt* in man;—manifestations in matter and spirit. Are these the whole of God?—is man his measure? Then is He exhausted, and not infinite. We affix the terms of human limitation to God, and speak of his Personality; some limiting it to one—others extending it to three, to seven, to thirty, or to many millions of persons. Can such terms apply to the Infinite? We talk of a *personal* God. If thereby we only deny that he has the limitations of unconscious matter, no wrong is done. But our conception of Personality is that of *finite* personality, limited by human imperfections; hemmed in by Time and Space; restricted by partial emotions,—displeasure, wrath, ignorance, caprice. Can this be said of God? If matter were conscious, as Locke thinks it possible, it must predicate *materiality* of God, as persons predicate *personality* of him. We apply the term *impersonal*. If it mean, that God has not the limitations of our personality, it is well; but if it mean that he has those of unconscious matter, it is worse than the other term. Can God be personal and conscious, as Joseph and Peter; unconscious and impersonal as a moss or the celestial ether? No man will say it. Where, then, is the philosophic value of such terms?

The nature of God is past finding out—"There is no searching of his understanding." As the absolute Cause, God must contain in himself, potentially, the ground of consciousness, of personality,—yes, of unconsciousness and impersonality. But to apply these terms to Him, seems to me a vain attempt to fathom the abyss of the Godhead, and report the soundings. Will our line reach to the bottom of God? There is nothing on Earth, or in Heaven, to which we can compare him; of course we can have no image of him in the mind.*

There has been enough of dogmatism respecting the nature, essence, and personality of God — respecting the Metaphysics of the Deity,—and that by men who perhaps did not thoroughly understand all about the nature, essence, and metaphysics of Man. It avails nothing. Meanwhile the greatest religious souls that have ever been, are content to fall back on the Sentiment and the Idea of God, and confess that none by searching can perfectly find out God. They can say, therefore, with an old Heathen, "Since He cannot be fully declared by any one name, though compounded of never so many, therefore is He rather to be called by every name, He being both one and all things; so that [to express the whole of God] either everything

* There has been some controversy on this question of the *personality* of God in modern times. The writings of Spinoza, both now and formerly, have caused much discussion of this point. The capital maxim of Spinoza on this head is, that all attempts to *determine* the nature of God are a negation of him — "*Determinatio negatio est;*" — see Ep. 50, p. 634, ed. Paulus. He thinks God has *self-conscious personality* only in self-conscious persons, *i. e.* men; Ethic. II. Prop. 11, and Coroll. — Some have thought to help the matter by the Trinitarian hypothesis. If there were but one man in the universe, he could not indeed, it is said, have our conception of personality, which demands other persons. This condition is fulfilled for the Divine Being as soon as we admit a Trinity in Unity. Mystical writers have always inclined to a denial of the personality of God. Thus Plotinus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Scotus Exigena, Meister Eckart, Tauler, and Böhme, to mention no more, deny it. On this subject see Hegel, Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God, at the end of Philosophie der Religion, Encyclopädie, § 562, *et seq.*, 2d ed. See the subject touched upon by Strauss, Glaubenslehre, § 33. See also Nitzsch's review of Strauss, in Studien und Kritiken for Jan. 1842. — In reference to Spinoza, see the controversial writings of Messrs. Norton and Ripley, above referred to.

must be called by his name, or He by the name of everything."* "Call him, therefore," says another Pagan, "by all names, for all can express but a whisper of Him; call Him rather by no name, for none can declare his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness."

Malebranche says, with as much philosophy as piety—"One ought not so much to call God a spirit, in order to express positively what He is, as in order to signify that He is not matter. He is a being infinitely perfect: of this we cannot doubt. But in the same manner we ought not to imagine that he is clothed with a human body under colour that that figure was the most perfect of any; so neither ought we to imagine that the Spirit of God has human ideas, or bears any resemblance to our Spirit, under colour that we know nothing more perfect than the human mind. We ought rather to believe that as He comprehends the perfection of matter without being material, ... so He comprehends also the perfections of created spirits without being spirit, in the manner that we conceive spirit. That his true name is, HE THAT IS,—or in other words, being without restriction,—All Being, the Being Infinite and Universal."† Still we have a positive Idea of God. It is the most positive of all;—it is implied logically in every idea that we form; so that, as God himself is the being of all existence—the background and cause of all things that are—the reality of all appearance,—so the Idea of God is the central truth, as it were, of all other ideas whatever. The objects of all other ideas are dependent, and not final; the object of this, independent and ultimate. This Idea of an Independent and Infinite

* See the Asclepian Dialogue, and also the passages from Seneca and Julian, cited in Cudworth, Vol. II. p. 679, *et seq.*, ch. iv. § 32.

† Recherches de la Verité, Liv. III. ch. ix. as cited in Hume, Dialogues concerning Nat. Rel. Vol. II. p. 469. See Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p. 441–540, 7th ed.; Weisse, Die Idee der Gottheit, 1833. Some have been unwilling to attribute *being* to the Deity, since we have no conception nor knowledge of *being in itself*, still less of *infinite being*. Our knowledge of *being* is only of *being this and that*, a *conditional being*, which is not predicable of God.

Cause, therefore, is necessarily presupposed by the conception of any dependent and finite effect. For example, a man forms a notion of his own existence. This notion involves that of *dependence*, which conducts him back to that on which dependence rests. He has no complete notion of his own existence without the notion of dependence; nor of that, without the object on which he depends. Take our stand where we may, and reason, we come back logically to this, which is the primitive fact in all our intellectual conceptions, just as each point in the circumference of a circle is a point in the radius thereof, and this leads straightway to the Centre, whence they all proceed.*

But the IDEA of God as a Being of Infinite Power, Wisdom, Love,—in one word, the Absolute,—does not satisfy. It seems cold; we call it abstract. We are not beings of Reason alone; so are not satisfied with mere Ideas. We have Imagination, Feelings, limited Affections, Understanding, Flesh and Blood; therefore we want a *conception* of God which shall answer to this complex nature of ours. Man may be said to live in the World of Eternity, or abstract truth; that of Time, or historical events; that of Space, or of concrete things. Some men want, therefore, not only an *Idea* for the first, but a *Conception* for the second, and a *Form* for the third. Accordingly the feelings, Fear, Reverence, Devotion, Love, naturally personify God, *humanize* the Deity, and represent the Infinite under the limitations of a finite and imperfect being, whom we "can know all about." He has the thoughts, feelings, passions, limitations of a man; is subject to time and space; sees, re-

* This is not the place to attempt a proof of God's existence. In Book I. Ch. II. I could only hint at the sources of argument. See in Weisse, Kant, and Strauss, a criticism on the various means of proof resorted to by different Philosophers. Weisse divides these proofs into three classes: 1. The *Ontological* argument, which leads to Pantheism; 2. The *Cosmological*, which leads to Deism; and 3. The *Theological*, which leads to pure Theism. See Leibnitz, Theodicee, Pt. I. § 7, p. 506, ed. Erdmann, 1840, and his Epist. ad Bierlingium, in his Ep. ad Div., ed Kortholt, Vol. IV. p. 21 (cited by Strauss, *ubi sup.*)

members, has a form. This is Anthropomorphism. It is well in its place;—some rude men seem to require it. They must paint to themselves a Deity with a form—the Ancient of Days—a venerable monarch seated on a throne, surrounded by troops of followers. But it must be remembered that all this is poetry; this personal and anthropomorphitic conception is a phantom of the brain, that has no existence independent of ourselves. A poet personifies a mountain or the moon; addresses it as if it wore the form of man, could see and feel, had human thoughts, sentiments, hopes, and pleasures, and expectations. What the poet's fancy does for the mountain, the feelings of reverence and devotion do for the Idea of God;—they clothe it with a human personality, because that is the highest which is known to us. Men would comprehend the Deity;—they can only apprehend him. A Beaver, or a Reindeer, if possessed of religious faculties, would also conceive of the Deity with the limitations of its own personality, as a Beaver or a Reindeer —whose faculties as such were perfect;—but the conception, like our own, must be only subjective, for man is no measure of God.*

Now by reasoning we lay aside the disguises of the Deity, which the feelings have wrapped about the Idea of Him. We separate the substantial from the phenomenal elements in the conception of God. We divest it of all particular *form*, all sensual or corporeal attributes, and have no *image* of God in the mind. He is spirit,† and therefore free from the limitations of space. He is nowhere in particular, but everywhere in general—essentially and vitally omnipresent. Denying all particular form, we must affirm of him Universal Being.

The next step in the analysis is to lay aside all partial

* See Xenophanes, as cited above by Eusebius, P. E. xiii. 13. See Karsten, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. p. 35, *et seq.*

† I use the term Spirit simply as a *negation of matter*. We cannot tell the *essence* of God.

action of the Deity. He is equally the cause of the storm and the calm sunshine; of the fierceness of the Lion, and the Lamb's gentleness, so long as both obey the laws they are made to keep. All the natural action in the material world is God's action,—whether the wind blows a plank, and the shipwrecked woman who grasps it, to the shore,—or scatters a fleet, and sends families to the bottom. But Infinite Action or Causation must be attributed to Him.

Then all mental processes, like those of man, are separated from the Idea of Him. We cannot say He thinks; for that is to reason from the known to the unknown, which is impossible to the Omniscient;—nor that He plans or consults with himself; for that implies the infirmity of not seeing the best way all at once;—nor that He remembers or foresees; for that implies a restriction in time, a past and a present,—while the Infinite must fill Eternity, all time, as well as Immensity, all space. We cannot attribute to Him reflection, which is afterthought,—nor imagination, which is forethought,—since both imply limited faculties. Judgment, fancy, comparison, induction—these are the operations of finite minds. They are not to be applied to the divine Soul except as figures of speech; then they merely represent an unknown emotion: we have got a name, but no real thing. But Infinite Knowing must be his.

We go still farther in this analysis of the conception of God, and all partial feeling must be denied. We cannot say that He hates, is angry or grieved, repents, is moved by the special prayer of James and John; that He is sad to-day and to-morrow joyful;—all these are human, limitations of our personality, and are no more to be ascribed to God than the form of the Reindeer, or the shrewdness of the Beaver. But Love implies no finiteness. This we conceive as Infinite.

At the end of the Analysis, what is left? BEING, CAUSE, KNOWLEDGE, LOVE,—each with no conceivable limitation: to express it in a word, a Being of Infinite Power, Wisdom,

and Goodness. Thus by an analysis of the conception of God, we find in fact, or by implication, just what was given synthetically by the intuition of Reason. But do these qualities exhaust the Deity? Surely not. They only form our Idea of Him. It is idle, impious, in man to say that the finite creature of yesterday can measure Him who is the All in All, the True, the Holy, the Good, the Altogether-Beautiful. Let a man look into the milky-way, and strive to conceive of the Mind that is the Cause, the Will, of all those centres to unknown worlds, and ask, What can I know of Him? Nay, let a man turn over in his hand a single crystal of snow, and consider its elements, their history, transformation, influence, and try to grasp up the philosophy of this little atom of matter, and he will learn to bow before the thought of Him, and say there is no searching of His understanding. If there are other orders of beings higher than ourselves, their Idea of God must include elements above our reach. The finite approximates, but cannot reach the Infinite.

In criticising the conception of God, I would not attempt the fool's task, to define and describe God's nature,—but to separate man's Idea of Him from all other ideas; not to tell all in God that answers to the Idea in man,—that of course is impossible,—but to separate the eternal Idea from the transient conception; to declare the positive and necessary existence of this Idea in man—of its Object out of man,—while I deny the existence of any limitation of human personality, or of our anthropomorphitic consciousness in the Deity.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATION OF NATURE TO GOD.

To determine the relation of Man to God, it is well to determine first the relation of God to Nature—the material world—that we may have the force of the analogy of that relation to aid us. Conscious man may be very dissimilar to unconscious matter, but yet their relations to God are analogous: both *depend* on Him. To make out the point, and decide the relation of God to Nature, we must start from the Idea of God which was laid down above,—a Being of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. Now to make the matter clear as noonday, God is either present in all space, or not present in all space. If Infinite, He must be present everywhere in general, and not limited to any particular spot; as an old writer so beautifully says, "Even Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Him."* Heathen writers are full of such expressions.† God, then, is universally present in the world of matter. He is the substantiality of matter. The circle of his being in space has an infinite radius. We cannot say, Lo here, or lo there, for He is everywhere. He fills all nature with his overflowing currents; without Him, it were not. His Presence gives it existence—his Will its law and force—his Wisdom its order—his Goodness its beauty.

* See, too, the beautiful statement in Ps. cxxxix. 1–13.

† See those in Cudworth, chap. iv. § 28, and elsewhere.

It follows unavoidably, from the Idea of God, that he is present everywhere in space; not *transiently* present, now and then, but *immanently* present, always; his centre here —his circumference nowhere; just as present in the eyelash of an emmet as in the Jewish holy of holies, or the sun itself. We may call common what God has cleansed with his presence; but there is no corner of space so small—no atom of matter so despised and little, but God, the Infinite, is there.*

Now, to push the inquiry nearer the point. The nature or substance of God, as represented by our Idea of him, is divisible or not divisible. If infinite, He must be indivisible; a part of God cannot be in this point of space, and another in that—his Power in the sun, his Wisdom in the moon, and his Goodness in the earth. He must be wholly, vitally, essentially present, as much in one point as in another point, or all points; as essentially present in each point at any one moment of time, as at any other or all moments of time. He is there, not idly present, but actively, as much now as at creation. Divine Omnipotence can neither slumber nor sleep. Was God but transiently active in matter at creation—his action now passed away? From the Idea of him it follows that He is immanent in the world, however much He also trancends the world. "Our Father worketh hitherto;" and for this reason Nature works, and so has done since its creation. There is no spot the foot of hoary Time has trode on, but is instinct with God's activity. He is the ground of Nature — what is permanent in the passing—what is real in the apparent. All nature, then, is but an exhibition of God to the senses; the veil of smoke on which his shadow falls; the dewdrop in which the heaven of his magnificence is poorly imaged. The Sun is but a sparkle of his splendour. Endless and without beginning

* See the judicious remarks of Lord Brougham, Dialogue on Instinct, Dial. II. near the end.

flows forth the stream of divine influence that encircles and possesses the All of things: from God it comes, to God it goes. The material world is perpetual growth, a continual transfiguration, renewal that never ceases. Is this without God? Is it not because God, who is ever the same, flows into it without end? It is the fulness of God that flows into the crystal of the rock, the juices of the plant, the life of the emmet and the elephant. He penetrates and pervades the world. All things are full of Him, who surrounds the sun, the stars, the universe itself; "goes through all lands, the expanse of oceans, and the profound Heaven."*

Inanimate matter, by itself, is dependent—incapable of life, motion, or even existence. To assert the opposite, is to make it a God. In its present state it has no will; yet there is in it existence, motion, life. The smallest molecule in a ray of polarized light, and the largest planet in the system, exist and move as if possessed of a Will, powerful, regular, irresistible. The powers of Nature, then,—that of Gravitation, Electricity, Growth,—what are they but modes of God's action? If we look deep into the heart of this mystery, such must be the conclusion. Nature is moved by the first Mover; beautified by Him who is the Sum of Beauty; animated by Him who is of all the Creator, Defence, and Life.†

Such, then, is the relation of God to matter up to this point: He is immanent therein, and perpetually active. Now to go farther. If this be true, it would seem that the various objects and things in nature were fitted to express

* Virgil, Georgic, IV. 222. See many passages cited by Cudworth, chap. iv. § 31, p. 664 *et seq.*, 455 *et seq.*, and the passages collected from Tschaleddin Rumi, by Rückert, in his Gedichte, and Tholuck, Blüthensammlung aus der morgenlandischen Mystik.

† Cudworth makes three hypotheses: either, 1. *All things happen* in nature by *the fortuitous concourse of atoms*, and this it is Atheism to suppose; or, 2. There is in Nature a *formative faculty*, "*a plastic nature*," which does the work; or, 3. Each act is done *immediately* by God. He, it is well known, adopts the second alternative. See chap. iii. § 37. See also More's Enchiridion Metaphysicum, Antidote against Atheism, Book II.; Apol. pro Cartesio, p. 115, *et seq.*

and reveal different degrees and measures of the divine influence, so to say; that this degree of manifestation in each depends on the capacity which God has primarily bestowed upon it;* that the material but inorganic, the vegetable but inanimate, and the animal but irrational world, received each as high a mode of divine influence as their several natures would allow.

Then, to sum up all in brief: The material world, with its objects sublimely great, or meanly little, as we judge them; its atoms of dust, its orbs of fire; the rock that stands by the sea-shore, the water that wears it away; the worm, a birth of yesterday, which we trample under foot; the streets of constellations that gleam perennial over head; the aspiring palm-tree, fixed to one spot; and the lions that are sent out free;—these incarnate and make visible all of God their natures will admit. If Man were not spiritual, and could yet conceive of the aggregate of invisible things, he might call it God, for he could go no farther.

Now, as God is Infinite, imperfection is not to be spoken of Him. His Will, therefore—if we may so use that term—is always the same. As Nature has of itself no power, and God is present and active therein, it must obey and represent his unalterable will. Hence, seeing the uniformity of operation—that things preserve their identity, we say they are governed by a law that never changes. It is so. But this Law—what is it but the will of God?—a mode of divine action? It is this in the last analysis. The apparent secondary causes do not prevent this conclusion.

The things of Nature, having no will, obey this law from necessity.† They thus reflect God's image, and make real his conception—if we may use such language with this ap-

* I will not say there is not, in the abstract, as much of divine influence in a *wheat-straw* as in a *world*. But in reference to ourselves, there *appear* to be *various degrees* of it.

† I use the term *obedience* figuratively. Of course there is no *real* obedience without *power to disobey*.

plication: they are tools, not artists. We never in Nature see the smallest departure from Nature's law. The granite, the grass, keep their law; none go astray from the flock of stars; fire does not refuse to burn, nor water to be wet: we look backwards and forwards, but the same law records everywhere the obedience that is paid to it. Our confidence in the uniformity of Nature's law is complete,—in other words, in the fact that God is always the same—his modes of action always the same. This is true of the inorganic, the vegetable, the animal world.* Each thing keeps its law, with no attempt at violation of it.† From this obedience comes the regularity and order apparent in Nature. Obeying the Law of God, his omnipotence is on its side; —to oppose a law of Nature, therefore, is to oppose the Deity. It is sure to redress itself.

But these created things have no consciousness, so far as we know,—at least nothing which is the same with our self-consciousness. They have no moral will—no power in general to do otherwise than as they do. Their action is not the result of forethought, reflection, judgment, voluntary obedience to an acknowledged law. No one supposes that the Bison, the Rosebush, or the Moon, reflect in themselves; make up their mind and say, "Go to, now, let us bring up our young, or put forth our blossoms, or give light at nightfall, because it is right to do so, and God's law." Their obedience is unavoidable,—they do what they

* M. Leroux, an acute and brilliant but fanciful writer, thinks the capabilities of man change by civilization, and, which is to the present point, that the *animals* advance also; that the Bee and the Beaver are on the march towards perfection, and have made some progress already. However he may make out the case metaphysically, it would be puzzling to settle the matter by facts. But if his hypothesis were admissible, it would not militate against the doctrine in the text.

† From this view it does not follow that animals are *mere machines*, with no consciousness,—only that they have not free-will. However, in some of the superior animals there is some small degree of freedom apparent. The Dog and the Elephant seem sometimes to exercise a mind, and to become in some measure emancipated from their instincts. On this curious question, see Descartes, Epist. P. I. Ep. 27, 67; Henry More, Epist. ad Cartesium.

cannot help doing.* Their obedience, therefore, is not their merit, but their necessity;—it is power they passively yield to—not a duty they voluntarily and consciously perform. All the action, therefore, of the material, inorganic, vegetable, and animal world, is mechanical, vital, or, at the utmost, instinctive; not self-conscious, the result of private will.† There is, therefore, no room for caprice in this department. The Crystal must form itself after a prescribed patern; the Leaf assume a given shape; the Bee build her cell with six angles. The mantle of Destiny is girt about these things;—to study the laws of Nature, therefore, is to study the modes of God's action. Science becomes sacred, and passes into a sort of devotion. Well says the old Sage—"Geometry is the praise of God." It reveals the perfections of the divine Mind; for God manifests himself in every object of science,—in the half-living Molecules of powdered wood—in the Comet with its orbit which imagination cannot surround—in the Cones and Cycloids of the Mathematician, that exist nowhere in the world of concrete things, but which the conscious mind carries thither.

* This point has been happily touched upon by Hooker, Eccles. Polity, Book I. chap. iii. § 2. See his curious reflections in the following sections.

† I have not the presumption to attempt to draw a line between these three departments of Nature, nor to tell what is the *essence of mechanical, vital,* or *instinctive* action. I would only indicate a distinction that, to my mind, is very plain; but I cannot pretend to say where one ends and the other begins. Again, it may seem unphilosophical to deny consciousness, or even self-consciousness, to the superior animals; but if they possess a self-consciousness, it is something apparently so remote from ours, that it only leads to confusion if both are called by the same term. The functions of a plant we cannot explain by the laws of *mechanical* action; nor the functions of an animal—a Dog for example—by any qualities of body. On this subject see Whewell, Hist. Inductive Sciences, Book IX. ch. i.-iii. Cudworth, ch. iii. § 37, No. 17, *et seq.*, has shown that there may be *sentient*, and not mere *mechanical* life, without consciousness, and therefore without *free-will*. Is not this near the truth, that God alone is *absolutely* free, and man has a *relative* freedom, the degree of which may be constantly increased? Taking a *certain stand-point*, it is true that Freedom and Necessity are the same thing, and may be predicated or denied of Deity indifferently; thus, if God is perfect, all his action is perfect: He can do no otherwise than as he does. Perfection, therefore, is his *necessity*: but it is his *freedom* none the less. Here the difference is merely in words.

Since all these objects represent, more or less, the divine mind, and are in perfect harmony with it, and so always at one with God, they express, it may be, all of Deity which matter in these three modes can contain, and thus exhibit all of God that can be made manifest to the eye, the ear, and the other senses of man. Since these things are so, Nature is not only strong and beautiful, but has likewise a religious aspect. This fact was noticed in the very earliest times; appears in the rudest worship, which is an adoration of God in Nature; it will move man's heart to the latest day, and exert an influence on souls that are deepest and most holy. Who that looks on the ocean, in its anger or its play—who that walks at twilight under a mountain's brow, listens to the sighing of the pines touched by the indolent wind of summer, and hears the light tinkle of the brook murmuring its quiet tune,—who is there but feels the deep Religion of the scene? In the heart of a city we are called away from God;—the dust of man's foot, and the sooty print of his fingers, are on all we see;—the very earth is unnatural, and the heaven scarce seen. In the crowd of busy men who set through its streets, or flow together of an holiday—in the dust and jar, the bustle and strife of business,—there is little to remind us of God: men must build a cathedral for that. But everywhere in nature, we are carried straightway back to Him. The fern, green and growing amid the frost—each little grass and lichen—is a silent memento. The first bird of spring, and the last rose of summer; the grandeur or the dullness of evening and morning; the rain, the dew, the sunshine; the stars that come out to watch over the farmer's rising corn; the birds that nestle contentedly, brooding over their young, quietly tending the little strugglers with their beak;—all these have a religious significance to a thinking soul. Every violet blooms of God, each lily is fragrant with the presence of Deity. The awful scenes of storm and lightning and thunder seem but the sterner sounds of the great concert

wherewith God speaks to man. Is this an accident? Ay, —earth is full of *such* accidents. When the seer rests from religious thought, or when the world's temptations make his soul tremble, and though the spirit be willing the flesh is weak; when the perishable body weighs down the mind, musing on many things; when he wishes to draw near to God, he goes not to the city—there conscious men obstruct him with their works,—but to the meadow, spangled all over with flowers, and sung to by every bird; to the mountain, "visited all night by troops of stars;" to the ocean, the undying type of shifting phenomena and unchanging law; to the forest, stretching out motherly arms, with its mighty growth and awful shade;—and here, in the obedience these things pay, in their order, strength, beauty, he is encountered front to front with the awful presence of Almighty power. A voice cries to him from the thicket, "God will provide." The Bushes burn with Deity. Angels minister to him. There is no mortal pang but it is allayed by God's fair voice as it whispers in nature, still and small, it may be, but moving on the face of the deep, and bringing light out of darkness.

"Oh joy that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive."

Now to sum up the result. It seems, from the very Idea of God, that He must be infinitely present in each point of space. This immanence of God in matter is the basis of his influence; this is modified by the capacities of the objects in nature; all of its action is God's action; its laws, modes of that action. The imposition of a law, then, which is perfect, and is also perfectly obeyed, though blindly and without self-consciousness, seems to be the measure of God's relation to matter. Its action therefore is only mechanical, vital or instinctive, not voluntary and self-conscious. From the nature of these things, it must be so.

CHAPTER III.

STATEMENT OF THE ANALOGY DRAWN FROM GOD'S RELATION TO NATURE.

Now if God be present in Matter, the analogy is that He is also present in Man. But to examine this point more closely, let us set out as before from the Idea of God. If He have not the limitations of matter, but is Infinite, as the Idea declares, then He pervades Spirit as well as Space —is *in* man as well as *out* of him. If it follows from the Idea that He is immanent in the material world—in a moss; it follows also that he must be immanent in the spiritual world—in a man. If he is immanently active, and thus totally and essentially present, in each corner of space and each atom of creation, then is He as universally present in all spirit. If the reverse be true, then He is not omnipresent; therefore not Infinite, and of course not God. The Infinite God must fill each point of Spirit as of Space. Here then, in God's presence in the soul, is a basis laid for his direct influence on Man; as his presence in Nature is the basis of his direct influence there.

As in nature his influence was modified only by the capacities of material things, so here must it be modified only by the capabilities of spiritual things; there it assumed the forms of mechanical, vital, and instinctive action; here it must ascend to the form of voluntary and self-conscious action. This conclusion follows undeniably from the analogy of God's presence and activity in matter. It follows as necessarily from the Idea of God; for as He is the materiality of matter, so is He the spirituality of spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GENERAL RELATION OF SUPPLY TO WANT.

We find in Nature that every want is naturally supplied; —that is, there is something external to each created being to answer all the internal wants of that being. This conclusion could have been anticipated without experience, since it follows from the perfections of the Deity, that all his direct works must be perfect. Experience shows this is the rule in nature. We never find a race of animals destitute of what is most needed for them, wandering up and down, seeking rest and finding none;—what is most certainly needed for each, is most bountifully provided; the supply answers the demand. The natural circumstances, therefore, attending a race of animals, for example, are perfect; the animal keeps perfectly the law or condition of its nature. The result of these perfect circumstances on the one hand, and perfect obedience on the other, is this,—each animal, in its natural state, attains its legitimate end, reaches perfection after its kind. Thus every Sparrow in a flock is perfect in the qualities of a Sparrow,—such at least is the general rule; the exceptions to it are so rare that they only seem to confirm that rule.

Now to apply this general maxim to the special case of man. We are mixed beings—spirits wedded to bodies. Setting aside the religious nature of man for the moment, and for the present purpose distributing our faculties into the animal, intellectual, affectional, and moral, let us see the relation between man's four-fold wants and the supply thereof. We have certain *animal* wants, such as the desire

of food, shelter, and comfort. Our animal welfare, even our animal existence, depends on the relation of the world to these wants, on the condition that they are supplied. Now we find in the world of nature, exterior to ourselves, a supply for these demands. It is so placed that man can reach it for himself. To speak in general terms, there is not a natural want in our body which has not its corresponding supply, placed out of the body; there is not even a disease of the body, brought upon us by disobedience of its law, but there is somewhere a remedy, at least an alleviation of that disease. The peculiar supply of peculiar wants is provided most abundantly when most needed, and where most needed—furs in the North, spices in the South, antidotes where the poison is found. God is a bountiful parent and no stepfather to the body, and does not pay off, to his obedient children, a penny of satisfaction for a pound of want. Natural supply balances natural want the world over.

But this is not all. How shall man find the supply that is provided? It will be useless unless there is some faculty to mediate between it and the want. Now man is furnished with a faculty to perform this office. It is *instinct*, which we have in common with the lower animals, and *understanding*, which we have more exclusively, at least no other animal possessing it in the same degree with ourselves. Instinct anticipates experience. It acts spontaneously where we have no previous knowledge, yet as if we were fully possessed of ideas; it shows itself as soon as we are born, in the impulse that prompts the infant to his natural food. It appears complete in all animals; it looks only forward, and is a perfect guide so far as it goes. The young chick pecks adroitly at the tiny worm it meets the first hour it leaves the shell;*—it needs no instruction. The lower animals have nothing but instinct for their guide;—it is sufficient for their purpose. They act, therefore, without

* See Lord Brougham, Dialogues on Instinct, for some remarkable facts.

reflection; from necessity, and are subordinate to their instinct, and therefore must always remain in the instinctive state.* Children, and savages—who are in some respects the children of the human race—act chiefly by instinct, but constantly approach the development of the understanding.

This acts in a different way. It generalizes from experience; makes an induction from facts—a deduction from principles. It looks both backwards and forwards. The man of understanding acts from experience, reflection, forethought, and habit. If he had no other impelling principle, all his action must be of this character. But though understanding be capable of indefinite increase, instinct can never be wholly extirpated from this compound being, man. The most artificial or cultivated feels the twinges of instinctive nature. The lower animals rely entirely on instinct—the savage chiefly thereon; while the civilized and matured man depends mostly on understanding for his guide. As the sphere of action enlarges, which takes place as the boy outgrows his childhood, and the savage emerges from barbarism, instinct ceases to be an adequate guide, and the understanding spontaneously developes itself to take its place.†

In respect, then, to man's animal nature, this fact remains,—that there is an external supply for each internal want, and a guide to conduct from the want to the supply. This guide is adequate to the purpose. When it is followed, and thus the conditions of our animal nature complied with, the want is satisfied, becomes a source of pleasure, a means of development. In this case there is nothing miraculous intervening between the desire and its gratification. Man

* Whewell, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. Pt. I. Book IX. ch. iii. Man may subdue the instinct of an animal, and apparently improve the creature, by superinducing his own understanding upon it. The pliant nature of dogs and horses enables them to yield to him in this case. But they are not *really* improved in the qualities of a dog or a horse, but only become caricatures of their master's caprice.

† See some profound remarks on the force of the instinctive life among savages, in Bancroft, *ubi sup.*, ch. xxii.

is hungry;—instinct leads him to the ripened fruit; he eats and is appeased. The satisfaction of the want comes naturally, by a regular law, which God has imposed upon the constitution of man; he is blessed by obeying, and cursed by violating this law. God himself does not transcend this law, but acts through it, by it, in it. We observe the law, and obtain what we need. Thus for every point of natural desire in the body, there is a point of natural satisfaction out of the body. This guide conducts from one to the other, as a radius connects the centre with the circumference. Our animal welfare is complete when the two are thus brought into contact.

Now the same rule may be shown to hold good in each other department into which we have divided the human faculties. There is something without us to correspond to each want of the *intellect*. This is found in the objects of nature; in the sublime, the useful, the beautiful, the common things we meet; in the ideas and conceptions that arise unavoidably when man, the thinking *subject*, comes intellectually in contact with external things, the *object* of thought. We turn to these things instinctively, at first,—

> "The *eye*,—it cannot choose but *see;*
> We cannot bid the *ear be still;*
> Our *bodies feel* where'er they be,
> Against or with our will."

Man is not sufficient for himself intellectually, more than physically. He cannot rely wholly on what he is. There is at first nothing in man but man himself; a being of multiform tendencies, and many powers lying latent—germ sheathed in germ. Without some external object to rouse the senses, excite curiosity, to stimulate the understanding, induce reflection, exercise reason, judgment, imagination,—all these faculties would sleep in their causes, unused and worthless in the soul. Obeying the instinctive tendency of the mind, which impels to thought, keeping its laws, we

gain satisfaction for the intellectual desires. One after another the faculties come into action, grow up to maturity; and intellectual welfare is complete with no miracle, but by obedience to the laws of mind.

The same may be said of the *affectional* and *moral* nature of man. There is something without us to answer the demands of the Affections and the Moral Sense, and we turn instinctively to them. Does God provide for the animal wants, and no more? He is no stepfather, but a bountiful parent to the intellectual, affectional, and moral elements of his child. There is a point of satisfaction out of these for each point of desire in them, and a guide to mediate between the two. This general rule may then be laid down, —That for each animal, intellectual, affectional, moral want of man, there is a supply set within his reach, and a guide to connect the two; that no miracle is needed to supply the want; but satisfaction is given as soon as the guide is followed and the law kept which instinct or the understanding reveals.

CHAPTER V.

STATEMENT OF THE ANALOGY FROM THIS RELATION.

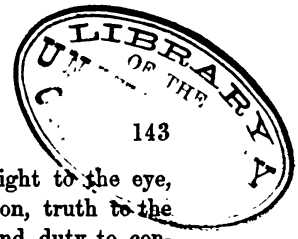
Now it was said before, that the religious was the deepest, highest, strongest element in man; and since the wants of the lower faculties are so abundantly provided with natural means of satisfying them, the Analogy leads us irresistibly to conclude that the higher faculty would not be neglected; that here as elsewhere there must be a natural and not miraculous supply for natural wants—a natural guide to conduct from one to the other, and natural laws, or conditions, to be observed, and natural satisfaction to be obtained in this way; that as God was no stepfather, but a bountiful parent to the lower elements, so he must be to the higher; that as there was a point of satisfaction out of the body, mind, and heart, for each desire in it, so there must be a point of satisfaction out of the soul, for each desire in the soul. Is it God's way to take care of oxen, and leave man uncared for? In a system where every spot on an insect's wing is rounded as diligently, and as carefully finished off as a world, are we to suppose that the Soul of man is left without natural protection? If there is a law, a permanent mode of divine action, whereby each atom of dust keeps its place and holds its own, surely we are not to dream that the soul of man is left with no law for its religious life and satisfaction.

To draw the parallels still closer. By the religious consciousness we feel the want of some *assured support* to depend on, who has infinite Power to sustain us, infinite Wisdom to provide for us, infinite Goodness to cherish us. As

we must know the *will of Him on whom we depend*, and thus determine what is religious truth and religious duty, in order that we may do that duty, receive that truth, obey that will, and thus obtain rest for the soul, and the highest spiritual welfare, by knowing and fulfilling its conditions; so Analogy teaches that in this, as in the other case, there must be a supply for the wants, and some plain, regular, and not miraculous means, accessible to each man, whereby he can get a knowledge of this Support, discover this Will, and thus, by observing the proper conditions, obtain the highest spiritual welfare.

This argument for a direct connection between man and God is only rebutted in one of these two ways:—either, first, by denying that man has any religious wants; or, secondly, by affirming that he is himself alone a supply to them, without need of reliance on anything independent of himself. The last is contrary to *philosophy;* for, *theoretically speaking, by nature there is nothing in man but man himself*, his tendencies, and powers of action and reception; *in the religious element there is nothing but the religious element*, as, theoretically speaking, by nature there is in the body nothing but the body—in hunger, nothing but hunger. To make man dependent on nothing but man—the religious sentiment on nothing but the religious sentiment, and therefore sufficient for itself,—is quite as absurd as to make the body dependent only on the body—the appetite of hunger on nothing but hunger, sufficient to satisfy itself. Besides, our consciousness, and above all our religious consciousness, is that of dependence. The soul feels its direct dependence on God, as much as the body sees it own direct dependence on matter.

If the one statement is contrary to philosophy, the other is contrary to *fact*. We feel religious wants; the history of man is a perpetual expression of these wants—an effort for satisfaction. It cannot be denied that we need something that shall bear the same relation to the religious sen-



timent which food bears to the palate, light to the eye, sound to the ear, beauty to the imagination, truth to the understanding, friendship to the heart, and duty to conscience. How shall we pass from the want to its satisfaction? Now the force of the Analogy is this: it leads us to expect such a natural satisfaction for spiritual wants, as we have for the humbler wants. The very wants themselves imply the satisfaction; as soon as we begin to act, there awakes by nature a Sentiment of God. Reason gives us a distinct Idea of Him; and from this Idea also it follows that He must supply these wants.

The question then comes as to the fact,—is there, or is there not, a regular law by which the religious wants are supplied, as by a regular law the body's wants are met? Now, animated by the natural trust, or faith, which is the spontaneous action of the religious sentiment, we should say, Yes, it must be so. God takes care of the sparrow's body: can he neglect man's soul? Then reasoning again from the general *analogy* of God's providence, as before shown, and still more from the *Idea* of God, as above laid down, we say again, It must be so; man must, through the religious sentiment, have a connection with God, as by the senses with matter. He is, relative to us, the object of the soul, as much as matter is the object of the senses. As God has an influence on passive and unconscious matter, so he must have on active and conscious man. As this action, in the one case, is only modified by the conditions of matter; so will it be, in the other, only by the conditions of man. As no obedient animal is doomed to wander up and down, seeking rest, but finding none; so no obedient man can left hopeless, forlorn—without a supply—without a gui .

Now it might be supposed that the spontaneous presentiment of this supply for our spiritual demands—this tw fold argument from the Idea of God and the Analogy o his action in general, would satisfy both the spontaneous and the reflective mind, convincing them of man's general

capability of a connection with God—of receiving truth in a regular and natural way from him, by revelation, inspiration, suggestion, or by what other name we may call the joint action of the divine and human mind. Such indeed is the belief of nations in an early and simple state. It is attested by the literature, traditions, and monuments of all primitive people. They believe that God held converse with man: He spoke in the voices of nature—in signs and omens—in dreams by night—in deep, silent thoughts by day; skill, strength, wisdom, goodness, were referred to Him. The highest function of man was God's Gift: He made the Laws of Minos, Moses, Numa, Rhadamanthus; —He inspires the Poet, Artist, Patriot—works with the righteous everywhere. Had Fetichism no meaning?—was Polytheism only a lie with no truth at the bottom? Prayers, sacrifices, fasts, priesthoods, show that men believed in intercourse with God. Good, simple-hearted men and women, who live lives of piety, believe it now, and never dream that it is a great philosophical truth which lies in their mind;—they wonder anybody should doubt it.

But yet, among *thinking* men, who have thought just enough to distrust instinct, but not enough to see by the understanding the object which instinct discloses,—especially, it seems, among thinking Englishmen and Americans, —a general doubt prevails on this point.

The material world is before our eyes; its phenomena are obvious to the senses, and most men having active senses, which develope before the understanding, and the lower faculties of intellect also, somewhat active, get pretty clear notions about these phenomena, though not of their cause and philosophy. But as the soul is rarely so active as the senses—as the whole spiritual nature is not often so well developed as the sensual, so spiritual phenomena are little noticed; very few men have clear notions about them. Hence to many men all spiritual and religious matters are vague—"Perhaps yes, and perhaps no," is all they can say. Then again the matter is made worse, for they hear extra-

vagant claims made in relation to spiritual things and intercourse with God. One man says, he was healed of a fever, or saved from drowning, not by the medicine, or the boatman, but by the direct interposition of God; another will have it that he has direct and miraculous illuminations, though it is plain he is still sitting in darkness. This bigot would destroy all human knowledge, that there may be clean paper to receive the divine word, miraculously written thereon; that fanatic bids men trust the doctrine that is reputed of miraculous origin, and even at variance with human faculties. Both the bigot and the fanatic condemn Science as the "Pride of Reason," and talk boastingly of their special revelations, their new light, the signs and wonders they have seen or heard of to attest this revelation. The sincere man of good sense is disgusted by these things, and asks if there be no Pride of Folly as well as of Reason, and no revelation of nonsense from the man's own brain, which is mistaken as an eternal truth coming winged from the Godhead? He rests, therefore, in his notions of mere material things; will see nothing which he cannot see through; believe nothing he cannot handle. These material notions have already become systematized; and so far as there is any philosophy commonly accredited amongst us, it is one which grows mainly out of this sensual way of looking at things,—a philosophy which logically denies the possibility of inspiration or intercourse with God, except through a miracle that shall transcend the faculties of man.

Now on this subject of inspiration there are but three views possible. Each of these is supported by no one writer exclusively or perfectly, but by many taken in the aggregate. Let us examine each of them as it appears in recent times, with its philosophy and logical consequences. However, it is to be remembered that all conclusions which follow logically, are not to be charged on men who admit the premises.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RATIONALISTIC VIEW, OR NATURALISM.

This allows that the original powers of Nature, as shown in the inorganic, the vegetable, and the animal world, all came from God at the first; that he is a principle, either material or spiritual, separate from the world, and independent thereof. He made the world, and all things, including man, and stamped on them certain laws, which they are to keep.* He was but *transiently* present and active in nature at creation; is not *immanently* present and active therein. He has now, nothing to do with the world but—to see it go. Here, then, is God on the one side; on the other, Man and Nature. But there is a great gulf fixed between them, over which there passes, neither God nor man.

This theory teaches that man, in addition to his organs of perception, has certain intellectual faculties by which he can reason from effect to cause; can discover truth, which is the statement of a fact; from a number of facts in science can discern a scientific law, the relation of thing to thing; from a number of facts in morals, can learn the relation of man to man; deduce a moral law, which shall teach the most expedient and profitable way of managing affairs. Its

* There is another form of *Naturalism* which denies the existence of a God separate, or separable from the universe. Since this system would annihilate all Religion, it may be called *irreligious Naturalism;* with that I have now nothing to do. Some have been called Rationalists, who deny that God is separate from the world. See above, Book I.

statement of both scientific and moral facts rests solely on experience, and never goes beyond its precedents. Still farther, it allows that man can find out that there is a God, by reasoning *experimentally* from observations in the material world, and *metaphysically* also, from the connection of notions in the mind. But this conclusion is only to be reached, in either case, by a process that is long, complicated, tortuous, and so difficult that but one man in some thousands has the necessary experimental knowledge, and but one in some millions the metaphysical subtlety requisite to go through it, and become certain that there is a God. Its notion of God is this,—a Being who exists as the Power, Mind, and Will, that caused the universe.

The metaphysical philosophy of this system may be briefly stated. In man, by nature, there is nothing but man. There is but one channel by which knowledge can come into man,—that is, *sensation*—perception through the senses. That is an assumption; nobody pretends it is proved. This knowledge is modified by *reflection*—the mind's process of ruminating upon the knowledge which sensation affords. At any given time, therefore, if we examine what is in man, we find nothing which has not first been in the senses. Now the senses converse only with finite phenomena. Reflection—what can it get out of these? The Absolute? The premise does not warrant the conclusion. Something "as good as Infinite?" Let us see. It makes a *scientific* law a mere generalization from observed facts, which it can never go beyond. Its science, therefore, is in the rear of observation; we do not know thereby whether the next stone shall fall to the ground or from it. All it can say of the universality of any law of science is this—"So far as we have seen, it is so." It cannot pass from the Particular to the Universal. It makes a *moral* law the result of external experience; merely an induction from moral facts; not the affirmation of man's moral nature declaring the eternal rule of Right. It learns morality by seeing what plan suc-

ceeds best in the long-run. Its morality is selfishness verified by experiment. A man in a new case, for which he can find no precedents, knows not what to do;—he is never certain he is right till he gets the reward. Its moral law at present, like the statute law, is the slowly-elaborated product of centuries of experience. It pretends to find out God, as a law in science, solely by reasoning from effect to cause—from a plan to the designer. Then on what does a man's belief in God depend? On man's nature, acting spontaneously? No; for there is nothing in man but man, and nothing comes in but sensations, which do not directly give us God. It depends on reflection, argument—that process of reasoning mentioned before. Now, admitting that sensation affords sufficient premise for the conclusion, there is a difficulty in the way: the man must either depend on his own reasoning, or that of another. In the one case he may be mistaken, in an argument so long, crooked, and difficult. It is at best an inference. The "Hypothesis of a God," as some impiously call it, may thus rest on no better argument than the hypothesis of Vortices, or Epicycles. In the other case, if we trust another man, he may be mistaken; still worse, may design to deceive the inquirer, as we are told the Heathen Sages did. Where, then, is the certain conviction of any God at all? This theory allows none. Its "proof of the existence of God" is a proof of the possibility of a God, —perhaps of the probability thereof; surely no more.

But the case is yet worse. In any argumentation there must be no more expressed in the conclusion than is logically and confessedly implied in the premises. When finite phenomena are the only premises, whence comes the Idea of Infinite God? It denies that man has any Idea of the Absolute, Infinite, Perfect. Instead of this, it allows only an accumulative notion, formed from a series of conceptions of what is finite and imperfect. The little we can know of God came from reasoning about objects of sense. Its notion of God is deduced purely from empirical observation: what

notion of a God can rest legitimately on that basis? Nature is *finite:* to infer an *infinite* Author, is false logic. We see but in part, and have not grasped up this sum of things, nor seen how seeming evil consists with real good, nor accounted for the great amount of misery, apparently unliquidated, in the world; therefore Nature is imperfect to man's eye: why infer a *perfect* Author from an *imperfect* work? *Injustice* and *cruelty* are allowed in the world: how then can its Maker be relied on as *just* and *merciful?* Let there be nothing in the conclusion which is not in the premises.

This theory gives us only a finite and imperfect God, which is no God at all. He cannot be trusted out of sight; for its faith is only an inference from what is seen. Instead of a religious sentiment in man, which craves all the perfections of the Godhead—reaches out after the Infinite "first Good, first Perfect, and first Fair," it gives us only a tendency to reverence or fear what is superior to ourselves, and above our comprehension; a tendency which the Bat and the Owl have in common with Socrates and Fenelon. It makes man the slave of his organization. Free-will is not possible. His highest aim is self-preservation; his greatest evil death. It denies the immortality of man, and foolishly asks "proofs" of the fact—proofs palpable to the senses. Its finite God is not to be trusted, except under His bond and covenant to give us what we ask for.

It makes no difference between Good and Evil;—Expedient and Inexpedient are the better words. These are to be learned only by long study and much cunning. All men have not the requisite skill to find out moral and religious doctrines, and no means of proving either in their own heart; therefore they must take the word of their appointed teachers and philosophers, who "have investigated the matter;" found there is "an expedient way" for men to follow, and a "God" to punish them if they do not follow it. In moral and religious matters the mass of men must rely on

the authority of their teachers. Millions of men, who never made an astronomical observation, believe that the distance between the Earth and the Sun is what Newton or Laplace declares it to be: why should not men take moral and religious doctrines on the same evidence? It is true, astronomers have differed a little—some making the Earth the centre, some the Sun,—and divines still more. But men must learn the moral law as the statute law. The State is above each man's private notions about good and evil, and controls these, as well as their passions. Man must act always from mean and selfish views, never from Love of the Good, the Beautiful, the True.

This system would have religious forms and ceremonies to take up the mind of the people; moral precepts, and religious creeds, "published by authority," to keep man from unprofitable crimes; an established Church—like the Jail and the Gallows—a piece of state machinery. It is logical in this; for it fears that without such a provision the sensual nature would overlay the intellectual; the few religious ideas common men could get, would be so shadowy and uncertain, and men be so blinded by Prejudice, Superstition, and Fancy, or so far misled by Passion and ignorant Selfishness, that nothing but want and anarchy would ensue. It tells men to pray. None can escape the conviction that prayer, vocal or silent, put up as a request, or felt as a sense of supplication, is as natural as hunger and thirst, or tears and smiles. Even an Atheist* talks of the important physiological functions of prayer. This theory makes prayer a Soliloquy of the man—a thinking with the upper part of the head—a sort of moral gymnastics. Thereby we get nothing from God: He is on the other side of the world; "He is a journeying, or pursuing, or peradventure he sleepeth." Prayer is useful to the worshipper, as the poet's frenzy when he apostrophizes a Mountain, or the Moon, and works him-

* M. Comte.

self into a rapture, but gets nothing from the Mountain, or the Moon, except what he carried out.

In a word, this theory reduces the Idea of God to that of an abstract cause, and excludes this cause both from man and the world. It has only a finite God, which is no God at all, for the two terms cancel each other. It has only a selfish morality, which is no morality at all, for the same reason. It reduces the soul to the aggregate functions of the flesh, Providence to a law, Infinity to a dream, Religion to priestcraft, Prayer to an apostrophe, Morality to making a good bargain, Conscience to cunning. It denies the possibility of any connection between God and man. Revelation and inspiration it regards as figures of speech, by which we refer to an agency purely ideal, what was the result of the senses and matter acting thereon. Men calling themselves inspired—speaking in the name of God—were deceivers, or deceived. Prophets, the religious Geniuses of the world, mistook their fancies for revelations; embraced a cloud instead of a Goddess, and produced only misshapen dreams. Judged by this system, Jesus of Nazareth was a pure-minded fanatic, who knew no more about God than Peter Bayle and Pomponatius, but yet did the world service, by teaching the result of his own or others' experience, as revelations from God, accompanied with the promise of another life,—which is reckoned a pleasant delusion, useful to keep men out of crime—a clever auxiliary of the powers that be.

This system has perhaps never been held in all its parts by any one man, but each portion has often been defended, and all its parts go together, and come unavoidably from that notion that there is nothing in man which was not first in the senses.* The best representatives of this school were, it may be, the French Materialists of the last century,

* See the judicious observations of Shaftesbury, eighth Letter to a Student.

and some of the English Deists. The latter term — Deist — is applied to men of the most various character and ways of thinking. Some of them were most excellent men in all respects; men who did mankind great service by exposing the fanaticism of the Superstitious, and by showing the absurdities embraced by many of the Christians. Some of them were much more religious and heavenly-minded than their opponents, and had a theology much more Christian, which called Goodness by its proper name, and worshipped God in lowliness of heart, and a divine life. But the spirit of this system takes different forms in different men. It appears in the cold morality and repulsive religion of Dr. Priestley, who was yet one of the best of men; in the scepticism of Hume and his followers, which has been a useful medicine to the Church; in the selfish system of Paley, far more dangerous than the doubts of Hume or the scoffs of Gibbon and Voltaire; in the coarse, vulgar materialism of Hobbes, who may be taken as one of the best representatives of the system.

It is obvious enough that this system of Naturalism is the *philosophy* which lies at the foundation of much of the popular theology in New England; that it is very little understood by the men, out of pulpits and in pulpits, who adhere to it; who, while they hold fast to the theory of the worst of the English Deists — though of only the worst; while they deny the immanence of God in matter and man, and therefore take away the natural possibility of inspiration, and cling to that system of Philosophy which justifies the Doubt of Hume, the Selfishness of Paley, the coarse Materialism of Hobbes, — are yet ashamed of their descent, and seek to point out others of a quite different spiritual complexion, as the lineal descendants of that ancient stock.

This system has one negative merit: it can, as such, never lead to fanaticism. Those sects, or individuals, who approach most nearly to pure Naturalism, have never been

accused, in religious matters, of going too fast or too far. But it has a positive excellence: it lays great stress on the human mind, and cultivates the understanding to the last degree. However, its Philosophy, its Theology, its Religion, are of the senses, and the senses alone.*

* I have not thought it necessary to refer particularly to the authors representing this system. I have rather taken pains to express their doctrine in my own words, lest individuals should be thought responsible for the sins of the system. One may read many works of divinity, and see that this philosophy lay unconsciously in the writer's mind. I do not mean to insinuate that many persons fully and knowingly believe this doctrine, but that they are yet governed by it, under the modification treated of in the next chapter. Locke has sometimes been charged with follies of this character, but unjustly, as it seems to me, for though many passages do certainly look that way, others are of a quite spiritual tendency. See King's Life of Locke, Vol. I. p. 366, *et seq.*, and his theological writings.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANTI-RATIONALISTIC VIEW, OR SUPERNATURALISM.

THIS system differs in many respects from the other; but its philosophy is at bottom the same. It denies that by natural action there can be anything in man which was not first in the senses. Whatever transcends the senses can come to man only by a miracle; and the miracle is attended with phenomena obvious to the senses. To develope the natural side of the theory, it sets God on the one side and man on the other. However, it admits the immanence of God in matter, and talks very little about the laws of matter, which it thinks require revision, amendment, and even repeal; as if the nature of things changed, or God grew wiser by experiment. It does not see that if God is always the same, and immanent in nature, the laws of nature can neither change nor be changed. It limits the power of man still farther than the former theory. It denies that he can, of himself, discover the existence of God; or find out that it is better to love his brother than to hate him—to subject the Passions to Reason, Desire to Duty, rather than to subject Reason to Passion, Duty to Desire.* Man can find

* Some Supernaturalists admit that man by nature can find out the most important religious truths in the way set down before; and some admit a moral sense in man; — others deny both. A recent writer denies that man can find by the light of Nature ANY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH; — Natural Theology is not possible. See Irons On the whole Doctrine of Final Causes, Lond. 1836, p. 34, 129, and *passim*. His introductory chapter on modern Deism is very curious. He has some excellent remarks (for there are two kingdoms of philosophy in him), but wishes to advance what he calls revealed religion, at the expense of the foundation of all religion. The Ottoman King never thinks himself secure on the throne till he has slain all his brothers.

out all that is needed for his animal and intellectual welfare, with no miracle; but can learn nothing that is needed for his moral and religious welfare. He can invent the steam-engine, and calculate the orbit of Halley's comet; but cannot tell Good from Evil, nor determine that there is a God. The Unnecessary is given him; the Indispensable he cannot get by nature. Man, therefore, is the veriest wretch in creation. His mind forces him to inquire on religious matters, but brings him into doubt, and leaves him in the very slough of Despond;—he goes up and down sorrowing, seeking rest, but finding none. Nay, it goes farther still, and declares that, by nature, all men's actions are sin, hateful to God.

On the other hand, it teaches that God works a miracle from time to time, and makes to man a positive revelation of moral and religious truth, which man could not otherwise gain. Its history of revelations is this: God revealed his own existence in a visible form to the first man; taught him religious and moral duties by words orally spoken. The first man communicated this knowledge to his descendants, from whom the tradition of the fact has spread over all the world. Men know there is a God, and distinction between right and wrong, only by hearsay, as they know there was a Flood in the time of Noah, or Deucalion. The first man sinned, and fell from the state of frequent communion with God. Revelations have since become rare—exceptions in the history of man. However, as man having no connection with the Infinite must soon perish, God continued to make miraculous revelations to one single people. To them he gave laws, religious and civil; made predictions, and accompanied each revelation by some miraculous sign, for without it none could distinguish the truth from a lie. Other nations received reflections of this light, which was directly imparted to the favoured people. At length he made a revelation of all religious and moral truth by means of his Son, a divine and miraculous being, both God and

man,—and confirmed the tidings by miracles the most surprising. As this revelation is to last forever, it has been recorded miraculously, and preserved for all coming time. The persons who received direct communication miraculously from God are of course Mediators between Him and the human race.

Now to live as religious men, we must have a knowledge of religious truth; for this we must depend alone on these mediators. Without them we have no access to God. They have established a new relation between man and God. But they are mortal, and have deceased. However, their sayings are recorded by miraculous aid. A knowledge of God's will, of morality and religion, therefore, is only to be got at by studying the documents which contain a record of their words and works; for the Word of God has become the letter of Scripture. We can know nothing of God, religion, or morals, at first hand. God was but transiently present in a small number of the race, and has now left it altogether.

This theory forgets that a verbal revelation can never communicate a simple idea, like that of God, Justice, Love, Religion, more than a word can give a deaf man an idea of sound. It makes inspiration a very rare miracle, confined to one nation, and to some scores of men in that nation, who stand between us and God. We cannot pray in our own name, but in that of the mediator, who hears the prayer, and makes intercession for us. It exalts certain miraculous persons, but degrades man. In prophets and saints, in Moses and Jesus, it does not see the possibility of the race made real, but only the miraculous work of God. Our duty is not to inquire into the truth of their word;—Reason is no judge of that. We must put faith in all which all of them tell us, though they contradict each other never so often. Thus it makes an antithesis between Faith and Knowledge, Reason and Revelation. It denies that common men, in the nineteenth century, can get at Truth, and

God, as Paul and John in the first century. It sacrifices Reason, Conscience, and Love, to the words of the miraculous men, and thus makes its mediator a tyrant, who rules *over* the soul by external authority, restricting Reason, Conscience, and Love—not a brother, who acts *in* the soul, by waking its dormant powers, disclosing truth, and leading others, by a divine life, to God, the Source of Light. It says the words of Jesus are true because he spoke them; not that he spoke them because true. It relies entirely on past times; does not give us the absolute Religion, as it exists in man's nature, and the Ideas of the Almighty—only an historical mode of worship, as lived out here or there. It says the canon of Revelation is closed; God will no longer act on man as heretofore. We have come at the end of the feast, are born in the latter days and dotage of mankind, and can only get light by raking amid the ashes of the past, and blowing its brands, now almost extinct. It denies that God is present and active in all spirit, as in all space;—thus it denies that He is Infinite. In the miraculous documents it gives us an objective standard, "the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice." These mediators are greater than the Soul; the Bible the master of Reason, Conscience, and the Religious Sentiment;—they stand in the place of God.

Men ask of this system, "How do you know there is in man nothing but the product of sensation, or miraculous tradition; that man cannot approach God except by miracle; that these mediators received truth miraculously, taught all truth, nothing but the truth; that you have their words, pure and unmixed, in your scriptures; that God has no farther revelation to make? The answer is—"*We find it convenient to assume all this, and accordingly have banished Reason from the premises; for she asked troublesome questions. We condescend to no proof of the facts;—you must take our word for that.*" Thus the main doctrines of the theory rest on assumptions—on no facts.

This system represents the despair of man groping after God. The religious sentiment acts, but is crippled by a philosophy poor and sensual. Is man nothing but a combination of five senses and a thinking machine, to grind up and bolter sensations, and learn of God only by hearsay? The God of Supernaturalism is a God afar off—its Religion worn out and second-handed. We cannot meet God face to face. In one respect it is worse than Naturalism; that sets great value on the faculties of man, which this depreciates and profanes. But all systems rest on a truth, or they could not be; this on a great truth, or it could not prevail widely. It admits the immanence of God in Nature, and declares also that mankind is dependent on Him for religious and moral truth, as for all things else; has a connection with God, who really guides, educates, and blesses the race, for he is transiently present therein. The doctrine of miraculous events, births, persons, deaths, and the like,—this is the veil of Poetry drawn over the face of Fact. It has a truth not admitted by Naturalism. Now only a few "*thinking*" men even in fancy can be satisfied without a connection with God; so Naturalism is always confined to a few reflective and cultivated persons, while the mass of men believe in the supernatural theory, at least in the truth it covers up. Its truth is of great moment;—its vice is to make God transiently active in man, not immanent in him; to restrict the divine presence and action to times, places, and persons. It overlooks the fact, that if religious truth be necessary for all, then it must either have been provided for and put within the reach of all, or else there is a fault in the divine plan. Then again, if God gives a natural supply for the lower wants, it is probable, to say the least, that he will not neglect the higher. Now for the religious consciousness of Man, a knowledge of two great truths is indispensable; namely, a knowledge of the existence of the Infinite God, and of the duty we owe to Him; for a knowledge of these two is implied in all religious

teaching and life. Now one of two things must be admitted, and a third is not possible:—either man *can discover these two things by the light of nature,* or *he cannot.* If the latter be the case, then is man the most hopeless of all beings. Revelation of these truths is confined to a few; it is indispensably necessary to all. Accordingly, the first hypothesis is generally admitted by the supernaturalists, in New England—though in spite of their philosophy—that these two things *can be discovered by the light of nature.* Then if the two main points—the premises which involve the whole of Morals and Religion—lie within the reach of man's natural powers, how is a miracle, or the tradition of a miracle, necessary to reveal the minor doctrines involved in the universal truth? Does not the faculty to discern the greater, include the faculty to discern the less? What covers an acre will cover a yard. Where then is the *use of the miraculous interposition?*

Neither Naturalism nor Supernaturalism legitimates the fact of man's religious consciousness;—both fail of satisfying the natural religious wants of the race. Each has merits and vices of its own. Neither gives for the Soul's wants a supply analogous to that so bountifully provided for the wants of the Body, or the Mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NATURAL-RELIGIOUS VIEW, OR SPIRITUALISM.

THIS theory teaches that there is a natural supply for spiritual as well as for corporeal wants; that there is a connection between God and the soul, as between light and the eye, sound and the ear, food and the palate, truth and the intellect, beauty and the imagination; that as we follow an instinctive tendency, obey the body's law, get a natural supply for its wants, attain health and strength, the body's welfare,—as we keep the law of the mind, and get a supply for its wants, attain wisdom and skill, the mind's welfare,—so if, following another instinctive tendency, we keep the law of the moral and religious nature, we get a supply for their wants—moral and religious truth; obtain peace of conscience and rest for the soul, the highest moral and religious welfare. It teaches that the world is not nearer to our bodies than God to the soul; "for in Him we live and move, and have our being." As we have bodily senses to lay hold on matter, and supply bodily wants, through which we obtain, naturally, all needed material things; so we have spiritual faculties, to lay hold on God, and supply spiritual wants; through them we obtain all needed spiritual things. As we observe the conditions of the body, we have nature on our side; as we observe the Law of the Soul, we have God on our side. He imparts truth to all men who observe these conditions;—we have direct access to Him, through Reason, Conscience, and the religious Sentiment, just as we

have direct access to nature, through the eye, the ear, or the hand. Through these channels, and by means of a law, certain, regular, and universal as gravitation, God inspires men, makes revelation of truth; for is not truth as much a phenomenon of God, as motion of matter? Therefore, if God be omnipresent and omniactive, this inspiration is no miracle, but a regular mode of God's action on conscious spirit, as gravitation is on unconscious matter; it is not a rare condescension of God, but a universal uplifting of man. To obtain a knowledge of duty, man is not sent away, outside of himself, to ancient documents, for the only rule of faith and practice: the Word is very nigh him, even in his heart, and by this Word he is to try all documents whatever. Inspiration, like God's omnipresence, is not limited to the few writers claimed by the Jews, Christians, or Mahometans, but is coëxtensive with the race. As God fills all space, so all spirit; as he influences and constrains unconscious and necessitated matter, so he inspires and helps free and conscious man.

This theory does not make God limited, partial, or capricious. It exalts man. While it honous the excellence of a religious genius—of a Moses or a Jesus,—it does not pronounce their character monstrous, as the supernatural, nor fanatical, as the rationalistic theory; but natural, human, and beautiful, revealing the possibility of mankind. Prayer, whether conscious or spontaneous, a word or a feeling, felt in gratitude or penitence, or joy or resignation, is not a soliloquy of the man, not a physiological function, nor an address to a deceased man, but a sally into the infinite spiritual world, whence we bring back light and truth. There are windows towards God, as towards the world. There is no intercessor, angel, mediator between man and God; for man can speak and God hear, each for himself. He requires no advocate to plead for men, who need not pray by attorney. Each soul stands close to the omnipresent God; may feel his beautiful presence, and have familiar access to

the All-Father; get truth at first-hand from its Author. Wisdom, Righteousness, and Love, are the Spirit of God in the soul of man;—wherever these are, and just in proportion to their power, there is inspiration from God. Thus God is not the author of confusion, but of Concord;—Faith and Knowledge, and Revelation and Reason, tell the same tale, and so legitimate and confirm one another.*

God's action on matter and on man is perhaps the same thing to Him, though it appear differently modified to us. But it is plain, from the nature of things, that there can be but one *kind* of Inspiration, as of Truth, Faith, or Love. It is the direct and intuitive perception of some truth, either of thought or of sentiment: there can be but one *mode* of Inspiration; it is the action of the Highest within the soul, the divine presence imparting light; this presence as Truth, Justice, Holiness, Love, infusing itself into the soul, giving it new life; the breathing in of Deity; the income of God to the soul, in the form of Truth through the Reason, of Right through the Conscience, of Love and Faith through the Affections and Religious Sentiment. Is Inspiration confined to theological matters alone? Most surely not. Is Newton less inspired than Simon Peter?†

* See Jonathan Edwards' view of Inspiration, in his sermon on a Divine Light imparted to the Soul, &c., Works, ed. Lond. 1840, Vol. II. p. 12, *et seq.*, and Vol. I. p. cclxix. No. 20.

† So long as inspiration is regarded as purely miraculous, good sense will lessen instances of it, as far as possible; for most thinking men feel more or less repugnance at believing in any violation, on God's part, of regular laws. As spiritual things are commonly less attended to than material, the belief in miraculous inspiration remains longer in religious than in secular affairs. A man would be looked on as mad, who should claim miraculous inspiration for Newton, as they have been who denied it in the case of Moses. But no candid man will doubt that, humanly speaking, it was a more difficult thing to write the Principia than the Decalogue. Man must have a nature most sadly anomalous, if, unassisted, he is able to accomplish all the triumphs of modern science, and yet cannot discover the plainest and most important principles of Religion and Morality without a miraculous revelation; and still more so, if, being able to discover, by God's natural aid, these chief and most important principles, he needs a miraculous inspiration to disclose minor details. Science is by no means indispensable, as Religion and Morals. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, if it is a real advantage, follows unavoidably from the

Now, if the above views be true, there seems no ground for supposing that there are different kinds or modes of inspiration in different persons, nations, or ages, in Minos or Moses, in Gentiles or Jews, in the first century or the last. If God be infinitely perfect, He does not change; then his modes of action are perfect and unchangeable. The laws of mind, like those of matter, remain immutable and not transcended. As God has left no age nor man destitute, by nature, of Reason, Conscience, Religion, so he leaves none destitute of inspiration. It is, therefore, the light of all our being; the background of all human faculties; the sole means by which we gain a knowledge of what is not seen and felt; the logical condition of all sensual knowledge; our highway to the world of spirit. Man cannot, more than matter, exist without God. Inspiration, then, like vision, must be everywhere the same thing in kind, however it differs in *degree*, from race to race, from man to man. The degree of inspiration must depend on two things: first, on the natural ability, the particular intellectual, moral, and religious endowment, or genius, wherewith each man is furnished by God; and next, on the use each man makes of this endowment. In one word, it depends on the man's *Quantity of Being*, and his *Quantity of Obedience*. Now as men differ widely in their natural endowments, and much more widely in the use and development thereof, there must of course be various degrees of inspiration, from the lowest sinner up to the highest saint. All men are not by birth capable of the same degree of inspiration; and by culture, and acquired character, they are still less capable of it. A man of noble intellect, of deep, rich, benevolent affections, is by his endowments capable of more than one less gifted.

Idea of God. The *Best* being, he must *will* the best of good things; the *Wisest*, he must devise plans for that effect; the *most Powerful*, he must bring it about. None can deny this. Does one ask another "proof of the fact?" *Is he so very full of faith who cannot trust God, except he have His bond in black and white, given under oath, and attested by witnesses?*

He that perfectly keeps the soul's law, thus fulfilling the conditions of inspiration, has more than he who keeps it imperfectly; the former must receive all his soul can contain at that stage of his growth. Thus it depends on a man's own will, in great measure, to what extent he will be inspired. The man of humble gifts at first, by faithful obedience, may attain a greater degree than one of larger outfit, who neglects his talent. The Apostles of the New Testament, and the true saints of all countries, are proofs of this. Inspiration, then, is the consequence of a faithful use of our faculties. Each man is its subject — God its source — Truth its only test. But as truth appears in various modes to us, higher and lower, and may be superficially divided, according to our faculties, into truths of the Senses, of the Understanding, of Reason, of Conscience, of the Religious Sentiment, so the perception of truth in the highest mode, that of Reason, Morals, Religion, is the highest inspiration. He, then, that has the most of Wisdom, Goodness, Religion, the most of Truth, in the highest modes, is the most inspired.

Now universal and infallible inspiration can of course only be the attendant and result of a perfect fulfilment of all the laws of mind, of the moral and the religious nature; and as man's faculties are limited, it is not possible to man: a foolish man, as such, cannot be inspired to reveal Wisdom, nor a wicked man to reveal Virtue, nor an impious man to reveal Religion. Unto him that hath, more is given. The poet reveals poetry, the artist art, the philosopher science, the saint religion. The greater, purer, loftier, more complete the character, so is the inspiration; for he that is true to Conscience, faithful to Reason, obedient to Religion, has not only the strength of his own virtue, wisdom, and piety, but the whole strength of omnipotence on his side; for goodness, truth, and love, as we conceive them, are not one thing in man, and another in God, but the same thing in each. Thus man partakes the divine nature, as the Plato-

nists, Christians, and Mystics call it. By these means the Soul of all flows into the man; what is private, personal, peculiar, ebbs off before that mighty influx from on high. What is universal, absolute, true, speaks out of his lips, in rude, homely utterance, it may be, or in words that burn and sparkle like the lightning's fiery flash.

This inspiration reveals itself in various forms, modified by the country, character, education, peculiarity of him who receives it, just as water takes the form and the colour of the cup into which it flows, and must needs mingle with the impurities it chances to meet. Thus Minos and Moses were inspired to make laws; David to pour out his soul in pious strains, deep and sweet as an angel's psaltery; Pindar to celebrate virtuous deeds in high heroic song; John the Baptist to denounce sin; Gerson and Luther and Böhme, and Fenelon and Fox, to do each his peculiar work, and stir the world's heart deep,—very deep. Plato and Newton, Milton and Isaiah, Leibnitz and Paul, Mozart, Raphael, Phidias, Praxiteles, and Orpheus, receive into their various forms the one spirit from God most high. It appears in action not less than in speech;—the Spirit inspires Dorcas to make coats and garments for the poor, no less than Paul to preach the Gospel. As that bold man himself has said, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all." In one man it may appear in the iron hardness of reasoning, which breaks through sophistry and prejudice, the rubbish and diluvial drift of time;—in another it is subdued and softened by the flame of affection; the hard iron of the man is melted, and becomes a stream of persuasion, sparkling as it runs.

Inspiration does not destroy the man's freedom; that is left fetterless by obedience. It does not reduce all to one uniform standard; but Habakkuk speaks in his own way, and Hugh de St. Victor in his. The man can obey or not obey—can quench the spirit or feed it, as he will. Thus

Jonah flees from his duty; Calchas will not tell the truth till out of danger; Peter dissembles and lies. Each of these men had schemes of his own, which he would carry out, God willing or not willing. But when the sincere man receives the truth of God into his soul, knowing it is God's truth, then it takes such a hold of him as nothing else can do. It makes the weak strong—the timid brave; men of slow tongue become full of power and persuasion. There is a new soul in the man, which takes him, as it were, by the hair of his head, and sets him down where the idea he wishes for demands. It takes the man away from the hall of comfort, the society of his friends; makes him austere and lonely—cruel to himself, if need be; sleepless in his vigilance, unfaltering in his toil; never resting from his work. It takes the rose out of the cheek; turns the man in on himself, and gives him more of truth. Then, in a poetic fancy, the man sees visions—has wondrous revelations; every mountain thunders—God burns in every bush, flames out in the crimson cloud, speaks in the wind, descends with every dove, is All in All. The Soul, deep-wrought in its intense struggle, gives outness to its thought, and on the trees and stars, the fields, the floods, the corn ripe for the sickle, on man and woman, its sees its burthen writ. The Spirit within constrains the man. It is like wine that hath no vent;—he is full of the God. While he muses, the fire burns; his bosom will scarce hold his heart; he must speak or he dies, though the earth quake at his word.* Timid flesh may resist, and Moses say, "I am of slow speech." What avails that? The Soul says, "Go, and I will be with thy mouth, to quicken thy tardy tongue." Shrinking Jeremiah, effeminate and timid, recoils before the fearful work—"The flesh *will* quiver when the pincers tear." He says, "I cannot speak; I am a child." But the great Soul of All flows into him and says, "Say not I am a

* See Lucan IX. 564, *et seq.*

child; for I am with thee. Gird up thy loins like a man, and speak all that I command thee. Be not afraid at men's faces, for I will make thee a defenced city, a column of steel, and walls of brass. Speak, then, against the whole land of sinners; against the kings thereof, the princes thereof, its people and its priests. They may fight against thee, but they shall not prevail; for I am with thee." Devils tempt the man, with the terror of defeat and want, with the hopes of selfish ambition. It avails nothing;—a "Get-thee-behind-me, Satan!" brings angels to help. Then are the man's lips touched with a live coal from the altar of Truth, brought by a Seraph's hand. He is baptized with the spirit of fire. His countenance is like lightning. Truth thunders from his tongue—his words eloquent as Persuasion; no terror is terrible—no fear formidable. The peaceful is satisfied to be a man of strife and contention, his hand against every man, to root up and pluck down and destroy, to build with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. He came to bring peace, but he must set a fire, and his soul is straitened till his work be done. Elisha must leave his oxen in the furrow; Amos desert his summer fruit and his friend; and Böhme, and Bunyan, and Fox, and a thousand others, stout-hearted and God-inspired, must go forth of their errand into the faithless world, to accept the prophet's mission, be stoned, hated, scourged, slain. Resistance is nothing to these men;—over them steel loses its power, and public opprobrium its shame; deadly things do not harm them; they count loss gain, shame glory, death triumph. These are the men who move the world;—they have an eye to see its follies, a heart to weep and bleed for its sin. Filled with a Soul wide as yesterday, to-day, and forever, they pray great prayers for sinful man;—the wild wail of a brother's heart runs through the saddening music of their speech. The destiny of these men is forecast in their birth;—they are doomed to fall on evil times and evil tongues, come when they will come.

The Priest and the Levite war with the Prophet, and do him to death;—they brand his name with infamy; cast his unburied bones into the Gehenna of popular shame;—John the Baptist must leave his head in a charger; Socrates die the death; Jesus be nailed to his cross; and Justin, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and millions of hearts stout as these, and as full of God, must mix their last prayers, their admonition, and farewell blessing, with the crackling snap of fagots, the hiss of quivering flesh, the impotent tears of wife and child, and the mad roar of the exulting crowd. Every path where mortal feet now tread secure, has been beaten out of the hard flint by prophets and holy men, who went before us, with bare and bleeding feet, to smooth the way for our reluctant tread. It is the blood of prophets that softens the Alpine rock;—their bones are scattered in all the high places of mankind. But God lays his burthens on no vulgar men;—He never leaves their souls a prey;—He paints Elysium on their dungeon wall. In the populous chamber of their heart, the light of Faith shines bright and never dies. For such as are on the side of God, there is no cause to fear.

The influence of God in Nature, in its mechanical, vital, or instinctive action, is beautiful. The shapely trees, the leaves that clothe them in loveliness; the corn and the cattle, the dew and the flowers; the bird, the insect, moss and stone, fire and water, and earth and air; the clear blue sky that folds the world in its soft embrace; the light which rides on swift pinions, enchanting all it touches, reposing harmless on an infant's eyelid, after its long passage from the other side of the universe,—all these are noble and beautiful; they admonish while they delight us, these silent counsellors and sovereign aids. But the inspiration of God in man, when faithfully obeyed, is nobler and far more beautiful. It is not the passive elegance of unconscious things which we see resulting from man's voluntary obedience,—

that might well charm us in nature; in man, we look for more. Here the beauty is intellectual,—the beauty of Thought, which comprehends the world, and understands its laws; it is moral,—the beauty of Virtue, which overcomes the world, and lives by its own laws; it is religious,—the beauty of Holiness, which rises above the world, and lives by the law of the Spirit of Life. A single good man, at one with God, makes the morning and evening sun seem little and very low. It is a higher mode of the divine Power that appears in him, self-conscious and self-restrained.

Now this, it seems, is the only kind of inspiration which is possible. It is coëxtensive with the faithful use of man's natural powers. Men may call it miraculous, but nothing is more natural;—or they may say it is entirely human, for it is the result of man's use of his faculties. But what is more divine than Wisdom, Goodness, Religion? Are not these the points in which man and God conjoin? If He is present and active in spirit, such must be the perfect result of the action. No doubt there is a mystery in it, as in sensation, in all the functions of man. But what then? As a good man has said—"God worketh with us both to will and to do." Reason, Conscience, Religion, mediate between us and God, as the senses between us and matter. Is one more surprising than the other? Is the one to be condemned as *spiritual* mysticism or Pantheism? Then so is the other as *material* mysticism or Pantheism. Alas! we know but in part; our knowledge is circumscribed by our ignorance.

Now it is the belief of all primitive nations that God inspires the wise, the good, the holy;*—yes, that he works

* On this doctrine see Sonntag, Doctrina Inspirationis, &c. 1803, § 1, *et seq.*, and the authors he cites. De Wette, Dogmatik, § 85–96, and § 143–148, gives the Old Testament doctrine of Inspiration. See also Hase, Hutterus Redivivus, § 41, Dogmatik, § 8; Bretschneider, *ubi sup.* Vol. I. § 14, *et seq.*; and Baumgarten-Crusius,

with man in every noble work. No doubt their poor conceptions of God degraded the doctrine, and ascribed to the Deity what came from their disobedience of his law.

The wisest and holiest men have spoken in the name of God. Minos, Moses, Zoroaster, Confucius, Zaleucus, Numa, Mahomet, profess to have received their doctrine straightway from Him. The sacred persons of all nations, from the Druid to the Pope, refer back to His direct inspiration. From this source the Sibylline oracles, the responses at Delphi, the sacred books of all nations, the Vedas and the Bible, alike claim to proceed. Pagans tell us that no man was ever great without a divine afflatus falling upon him.* Much falsity was mingled with the true doctrine, for that was imperfectly understood; and violence, and folly, and lies, were thus ascribed to God. Still the popular belief shows that the human mind turns naturally in this direction. Each prophet,—false or true—in Palestine, Nubia, India, Greece,—spoke in the name of God. In this name the apostles of Christ and of Mahomet, the Catholic and the Protestant, went to their work.† A good man feels that Justice, Goodness, Truth, are immutable, not dependent on himself; that certain convictions come by a law over which he has no control. There they stand; he cannot

Dogmengeschichte, Vol. II. p. 775, *et seq.* Much useful matter has been collected by these writers, and by Münscher, Bauer, Von-Cölln, and Strauss; but a special history of the doctrine is still a desideratum.

* See the opinions of the ancients in the classic passages, Cicero de Nat. Deorum, II. 66; Orat. pro Arch. c. 8, Tusc. V. 4; Xenophon, Memorab. I. 1; Seneca, Ep. XLI. See many passages collected in Sonntag. See also Barclay's Apology for the Quakers, Prop. I.–III. XI.; Sewel's History of the Quakers, B. IX. X. XI. XII. and p. 693; and George Fox's Journal, *passim.*

† The history of the formation of the ecclesiastical doctrine of inspiration, which is the Supernatural view, is curious. It did not assume its most exclusive shape in the early teachers. In John of Damascus it appears in its vigour; in Abelard and Peter Lombard, it is more mild and liberal. Since the Reformation, it has been violently attacked. Luther himself is fluctuating in his opinions. As men's eyes opened, they would separate falsehood from truth. The writings of the English Deists had a great influence in this matter. See Walch's Religions-Streitigkeiten, Vol. V. ch. vii. Strauss also, Vol. I. § 14, *et seq.*, gives a brief and compendious account of attacks on this doctrine.

alter, though he may refuse to obey them. Some have considered themselves bare tools in the hand of God; they did and said they knew not what, thus charging their follies and sins on God Most High. Others, going to a greater degree of insanity, have confounded God with themselves, declaring that they were God. But even if likeness were perfect, it is not identity. But a ray from the primal light falls on man. No doubt there have been men of an high degree of inspiration, in all countries—the founders of the various religions of the world. But they have been limited in their gifts, and their use of them. The doctrine they taught had somewhat national, temporal, even personal, in it, and so was not the Absolute Religion. No man is so great as human Nature, nor can one finite being feed forever all his brethren. So their doctrines were limited in extent and duration.

Now this inspiration is limited to no sect, age, or nation. It is wide as the world, and common as God. It is not given to a few men, in the infancy of mankind, to monopolize inspiration, and bar God out of the soul. You and I are not born in the dotage and decay of the world. The stars are beautiful as in their prime; "the most ancient Heavens are fresh and strong;" the bird merry as ever at its clear heart. God is still everywhere in nature,—at the line, the pole, in a mountain or a moss. Wherever a heart beats with love—where Faith and Reason utter their oracles,—there also is God, as formerly in the heart of seers and prophets. Neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem, nor the soil that Jesus blessed, so holy as the good man's heart; nothing so full of God. This inspiration is not given to the learned alone, not to the great and wise, but to every faithful child of God. The world is close to the body; God closer to the soul, not only without but within, for the all-pervading current flows into each. The clear sky bends over each man, little or great; let him uncover his head—

there is nothing between him and infinite space. So the ocean of God encircles all men; uncover the soul of its sensuality, selfishness, sin—there is nothing between it and God, who flows into the man, as light into the air. Certain as the open eye drinks in the light, do the pure in heart see God; and he that lives truly, feels Him as a presence not to be put by.*

But this is a doctrine of experience as much as of abstract reasoning. Every man who has ever prayed—prayed with the mind, prayed with the heart greatly and strong—knows the truth of this doctrine, welcomed by pious souls. There are hours, and they come to all men, when the hand of destiny seems heavy upon us; when the thought of time misspent, the pang of affection misplaced or ill requited, the experience of man's worse nature, and the sense of our own degradation, come over us. In the outward and inward trials, we know not which way to turn;—the heart faints, and is ready to perish. Then, in the deep silence of the soul, when the man turns inward to God, light, comfort, peace, dawn on him. His troubles—they are but a dewdrop on his sandal; his enmities or jealousies, hopes, fears, honours, disgraces, all the undeserved mishaps of life, are lost to the view, diminished, and then hid in the mists of the valley he has left behind and below him. Resolution comes over him with its vigorous wing; Truth is clear as noon; the soul in faith rushes to its God. The mystery is at an end.

It is no vulgar superstition to say that men are inspired in such times. They are the seedtime of life. Then we live whole years through in a few moments, and afterwards, as we journey on in life, cold and dusty, and travel-worn and faint, we look to that moment as a point of light; the

* Such as like to settle questions by *authority*, will see that this is the doctrine of the more spiritual writers of the Old and New Testaments, especially of John and Paul.

remembrance of it comes over us like the music of our home heard in a distant land;—like Elisha in the fable, we go long years in the strength thereof. It travels with us, a great wakening light, a pillar of fire in the darkness, to guide us through the lonely pilgrimage of life. These hours of inspiration, like the flower of the aloe-tree, may be rare, but are yet the celestial blossoming of man—the result of the past, the prophecy of the future. They are not numerous to any man;—happy is he that has ten such in a year,—yes, in a life-time.

Now to many men, who have but once felt this—when heaven lay about them, in their infancy, before the world was too much with them, and they had laid waste their powers, getting and spending—when they look back upon it, across the dreary gulf where Honour, Virtue, Religion, have made shipwreck and perished with their youth,—it seems visionary—a shadow, dream-like, unreal. They count it a phantom of their inexperience—the vision of a child's fancy, raw and unused to the world. Now they are wiser. They cease to believe in inspiration;—they can only credit the saying of the priests, that long ago there were inspired men, but none now; that you and I must bow our faces to the dust, groping like the Blind-worm and the Beetle—not turn our eyes to the broad, free Heaven; that we cannot walk by the great central and celestial light that God made to guide all that come into the world, but only by the farthing-candle of tradition, poor and flickering light, which we get of the priest, which casts strange and fearful shadows around us as we walk, that "leads to bewilder and dazzles to blind." Alas for us if this be all!

But can it be so?—has Infinity laid aside Its omnipresence, retreating to some little corner of space? No! The grass grows as green, the birds chirp as gaily, the sun shines as warm, the moon and the stars walk in their pure beauty, sublime as before, morning and evening have lost none of their loveliness—not a jewel has fallen from the diadem of

night. God is still there, ever present in matter, else it were not; else the serpent of Fate would coil him about the All of things, would crush it in his remorseless grasp, and the hour of ruin strike creation's knell.

Can it be, then, as so many tell us, that God, transcending time and space, immanent in matter, has forsaken man; retreated from the Shekinah in the holy of holies to the court of the Gentiles?—that now He will stretch forth no aid, but leave his tottering child to wander on, amid the palpable obscure, eyeless and fatherless—without a path, with no guide but his feeble brother's words and works—groping after God if haply he may find him—and learning, at last, that He is but a God afar off, to be approached only by mediators and attorneys, not face to face as before? Can it be, that Thought shall fly through the Heaven, his pinion glittering in the ray of every star, burnished by a million suns, and then come drooping back, with ruffled plume and flagging wing, and eye that once looked undazzled on the sun—now spiritless and cold—come back to tell us that God is no Father?—that He veils his face, and will not look upon his child, his erring child? No more can this be true! Conscience is still God-with-us; a Prayer is deep as ever of old—Reason as true, Religion as blest. Faith still remains the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; Love is yet mighty to cast out fear. The Soul still searches the deeps of God; the pure in heart see Him. The substance of the Infinite is not yet exhausted, nor the well of Life drunk dry. The Father is near us as ever, else Reason were a traitor, Morality a hollow form, Religion a mockery, and Love an hideous lie! Now, as in the days of Adam, Moses, Jesus, he that is faithful to Reason, Conscience, and Religion, will, through them, receive inspiration to guide him through all his pilgrimage.

BOOK III.

" Where there is a great deal of smoke and no clear flame, it argueth much moisture in the matter, and yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and therefore dubious questioning is a much better evidence, than that senseless deadness which most men take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences have no doubts." — LEIGHTON, cited by COLERIDGE, *Aids to Reflection*, American edition, 1829, p. 64.

" He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own Sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all." — COLERIDGE, *ubi sup.*, p. 64–65.

" While everybody wishes to believe rather than examine and decide, a just judgment is never passed upon a matter of the greatest importance; our opinion thereof is taken on trust. The error of our fathers, which has fallen into our hands, whirls us round, and drives us headlong. We are ruined by the example of others. We shall be healed if we separate from the rabble. Now the people, in hostility with Reason, stand up as the defence of what is their own mischief." — SENECA, *De Vita Beata*, ch. i., a free translation.

BOOK III.

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT TO JESUS OF NAZARETH, OR A DISCOURSE OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION, AND THE METHOD OF INQUIRY.

It was said before, that Religion, like Love, is always the same thing in kind, though both are necessarily modified by other emotions combining therewith, and by the conception of the object to which the emotion is directed. Thus Love is modified as it chances to coëxist with weakness or strength, folly or wisdom, selfishness or morality,—qualities in the *subject* who loves. By these qualities the *degree* of Love is determined. It is modified also by the qualities of the *object;* as love is directed towards a child, a wife, or a friend. Hence come the different modifications of Religion as it coëxists with faith or fear, wisdom or ignorance, love or hate, in the worshipping *subject;* and again as the object of worship is conceived to be one being, or many beings, or all being—as he is conceived of as the absolutely Perfect —or represented as finite, cruel, capricious, and unlovely. The only perfect form of Religion is produced by all the powers of a man's nature acting harmoniously together. All manifestations of Religion proceed from the religious sentiment in man, and are more or less imperfect represen-

tations of that sentiment, as its action is more or less impeded or promoted by various causes.

If this be so, it follows that the religious Sentiment or Principle in man bears the same relation to each and all particular forms and teachers of Religion, that Reason bears to each and all particular systems or teachers of Philosophy: —that is, as no one teacher or system of Philosophy, nor all teachers and systems taken together, have exhausted Reason, which is the groundwork and standard-measure of them all, and is represented more or less partially in each of them, —and therefore, as new teachers and new systems of Philosophy are always possible and necessary until a system is discovered which embraces all the facts of Science, sets forth and legitimates all the laws of nature, and thus represents the Absolute Science, which is implied in the Facts of nature, or the Ideas of God,—so no one teacher or form of Religion, nor all teachers and forms put together, have exhausted the religious Sentiment, which is the groundwork and standard-measure of them all, and is represented more or less partially in each; and so new teachers and new forms of Religion are always possible and necessary, until a form is discovered which embraces all the facts of man's moral and religious nature, sets forth and legitimates all the laws thereof, and thus represents the Absolute Religion, as it is implied in the Facts of man's nature, or the Ideas of God. As no system or teacher of Philosophy is greater than Reason, and competent to give laws to nature, but at the utmost is only coördinate with Reason, and competent to discover and announce the laws of nature previously existing; so no form or teacher of Religion can be greater than the religious Sentiment, and competent to give laws to man, but at the utmost is only coördinate with the religious Sentiment, and competent to discover and announce the laws of man previously existing. In one word, Absolute Science answers exactly to Reason, and is what Reason demands; Absolute Religion answers exactly to the religious Sentiment, and is

what the religious Sentiment demands. Therefore, until Philosophy and Religion attain the Absolute, each form or teacher of either is subject to be modified or supplanted by any man who has a truth not embraced by the Philosophy or Religion at that time extant. However, there are certain primary truths of Science and Religion, which alone render the two possible, and which are possessed with more or less of a distinct understanding by *all* teachers of the two, and attain greater prominence with some. Though the system may have many faults accidentally connected with it, though others may point out the faults and develope the system still farther, yet the first principles remain. Thus in Science the maxims of Geometry, in Morals the first truths thereof, must reappear in all the systems.

Now to make a special application of these general remarks: Christianity can be no greater than the religious Sentiment, though it may be less,—as the water can of itself rise no higher in the pipe than in the fountain, though, if the pipe be defective, it may fail of its former height. Religion is the universal term, and absolute Religion and Morality its highest expression. Christianity is a particular form under this universal term—one form of religion among many others. It is either absolute Religion and Morality, or it is less; greater it cannot be, as there is no greater. Christianity, then, is a form of Religion. As it is actual, it must have been *revealed;* if it is true, it must be *natural.* It is therefore to be examined and judged of as other forms of Religion, by Reason and the religious Sentiment. It is true or false; perfect or imperfect.

The question, then, reduces itself to this: Is Christianity the Absolute Religion? To answer the question, we must know, first, what Christianity is; secondly, what Absolute Religion is. If Christianity is not the Absolute, we must of course look for a more perfect revelation of Religion, just as we look for improvements in Science till Philosophy becomes absolute. But if Christianity be this, or involve it,

by Jesus of Nazareth. The first must be eternally true; but it follows from no premise that the second is eternally true. He may have taught absolute Religion, or an imperfect form; he may have omitted what was essential, or have added what was national, temporal, personal. In either case, Christianity is not the Absolute Religion. But if it has none of these faults, and really conforms with this ideal standard, or involves this, and if nothing therein contradicts it, then Christianity is the Absolute Religion; eternally true, before revelation, after revelation; the Law God made for man, and wrote in his nature.

Then, again, if the character of Jesus was not a perfect manifestation of this perfect Religion which he taught or implied; if his application of it to life was limited by his position, his youth, his indiscretion, fanaticism, prejudice, ignorance, selfishness, as some have contended, it does not make the Religion he taught any the less perfect in itself; if true at all, it is eternally true;—if Christianity be true at all, it would be just as true if Herod or Catiline had taught it. Therefore, if the *intellectual* character of Jesus had never so many defects; if he entertained false notions about himself, his office, ministry, destination—respecting ancient history and Jewish literature, the existence and agency of devils, and in general, respecting things past, present, and to come; if he entertained the absurdest notions at the same time with his pure doctrine; nay, if he had never so many *moral* deficiencies,—if he denounced his enemies, and was frightened at danger, and fled away from death, or had even recanted his most vigorous statements,—still his religious *doctrine* remains unaffected by all of these circumstances. To make this point clear by recurring to a former illustration: A philosopher may show that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, yet lead an immoral life, believe in witches, devils, the philosopher's stone, and imputed righteousness. His absurd belief and wicked life do not affect the truth of his theorem.

Now, then, to determine what Christianity is, we must remove all those extraneous matters relating to the person, character, and authority of him who first taught it; we must separate it from all applications thereof which have been made to life; must view it by itself, as doctrine, as life, and measure it by this ideal standard of absolute Religion. After we have determined this question, we may then judge of the applications of Christianity to life, of the character of its Revealer, and try both by the standard he offers.

CHAPTER II.

REMOVAL OF SOME DIFFCULTIES — CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN RECORDS.

THE method of acquiring a knowledge of Absolute Religion is plain and easy; but to get a knowledge of the doctrine taught by any teacher of ancient times is more difficult. This, however, may be said in general, that there are three sources of knowledge accessible to men; two of these are direct, and one indirect: first, *Perception* through the senses; by this we only get an acquaintance with material things and their properties;—second, *Intuition* through Reason, Conscience, the Religious Sentiment, by which we get an acquaintance with spiritual things, which are not objects of sense;—third, *Reflection*, a mental process, by which we unfold what is contained or implied or suggested in perceptions or intuitions. Then as a secondary, but not ultimate source, there is *Testimony*, by which we learn what others have found out through perception, intuition, or reflection. Now thoughts or objects of thought may be classified in reference to their sources. The truths of absolute Religion are not matters of Sense, it is plain. If objects of Reflection or Intuition, they must be obvious to all who have the intuitive or reflective faculty, and will use it; they therefore are matters of direct personal experience;—not so a knowledge of any given historical form of Religion. As it has been before said, the great truths of Religion are matters of intuition; God helping the faithful, who use their faculties

justly. Therefore, theoretically, each may depend on his own intuitions, as each thinker on his own reflections;—if not faithful, the aid, the counsel, the example of the good man, help us to the truth. The wise and the pious are the educators whom God appoints for the race; by their superior gift, they help feebler men to understand what else the latter might never have reached. The same rule holds good in both Philosophy and Religion: the weak need the help of the strong, youth of experience, the faithless of the faithful. The works and words of the saint help the sinner to the source of truth. This is the office of prophets and apostles.

In historical questions, respecting events that took place out of the sphere of our observation, we must depend on the testimony of others who report what they have seen and heard, felt or thought. To determine what Christianity is, we must depend on the testimony of the Evangelists, who profess to relate the works and words of Jesus,—and of the Apostles, who reduced his thought to organization, and applied it to life. To speak of the four Evangelists:—admitting, for the sake of the argument, that we have their evidence, and that the books in our hands come really from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and that they bore the relation to Jesus which they claim;—the question comes, Are they competent to testify in the case?—can we trust them to give us the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Admitting that they were honest, yet if they were but *men*, there must be limitations to the accuracy of their testimony. They must omit many things that Jesus said and did,—perhaps both actions and words important in estimating his doctrines. They can express only so much of their teacher's opinions as they know; to do this they might perhaps modify, at least colour, the doctrine in their own minds. They might sometimes misunderstand what they heard; mistake a general for a particular statement, and the reverse; a new doctrine of the teacher might accidentally coincide in part with an old doctrine, and he be supposed to

teach what he did not teach; a parable or an action might be misunderstood; a quotation misapplied or forgotten, and another put in its place; a general prediction, wish, or hope, referred to a specific time, or event, when it had no such reference. He may have merely allowed things which he was afterwards supposed to have commanded. The writers might unconsciously exaggerate or diminish the fact; they might get intelligence at second-hand, from hearsay, and popular rumour. Their national, sectarian, personal prejudices, must colour their narrative; they might confound their own notions with his, and represent him as teaching what he did not teach. They might not separate fact from fancy; their love of the marvellous might lead them astray. If they believed in miracles they would ascribe prodigious things to their teacher; had they a faith in ghosts and devils, they would naturally interpret his words in favour of their own notions, rather than in opposition thereto. If the writers were ignorant men; if they wrote in one language, and he spoke in another; still more, if they wrote at some distance of time from the events, and were not skilled in sifting rumours and separating fact from fiction,—the difficulty becomes still greater. These defects are common, more or less, to all historical testimony;—in the case of the Evangelists, they constitute a very serious difficulty. We know the character of the writers only from themselves; they relate much from hearsay; they mingle their own personal prejudices in their work; their testimony was not reduced to writing, so far as we know, till long after the event; we see they were often mistaken, and did not always understand the words or actions of their teacher; that they contradict one another, and even themselves; that they mingle with their story puerile notions and tales which it is charitable to call absurd. Such testimony could not be received if found in Valerius Maximus and Livy, or offered in a court of justice, when only a few dollars were at stake, without great caution.

Now the difficulty in this case is enormous;—it has been felt from an early age. To get rid of the evil, it has been taught, and even believed, that the Evangelists and Apostles were miraculously inspired, to such a degree that they could commit no mistake of any kind in this matter, and had none of the defects above hinted at. The assumption is purely gratuitous; there is not a fact on which to base it. From the doctrine of inspiration as before laid down, it appears that such infallibility is not *possible;* and from an examination of the facts of the case, it appears it was not *actual.* The Evangelists differ widely from the Apostles; the Synoptics* give us in Jesus a very different being from the Christ whom John describes; and all four make such contradictory statements on some points, as to show that they were by no means infallibly inspired;—for in that case, not only the smallest contradiction would have been impossible, but, without concert, they must all have written exactly the same thing; yet John omits the most surprising facts, the Synoptics the most surprising doctrines.

What has been said is sufficient to show that we must proceed with great caution in accepting the statements of the Gospels. The most careless observer sees inconsistencies, absurd narrations; finds actions attributed to Jesus, and words put into his mouth, which are directly at variance with his great principles and the general tone of his character. Still there must have been a foundation of fact for such a superstructure; a great spirit to have commenced such a movement as the Christian; a great doctrine to have accomplished this, the most profound and wondrous revolution in human affairs. We must conclude that these writers would describe the main features of his life, and set down the great principles of his doctrine, its most salient points and his most memorable sayings, such as were poured out in the highest moments of inspiration. If the teacher were

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

true, these sayings would involve all the rest of his doctrine, which any man of simple character, religious heart, and mind free from prejudice, could unfold and develope still farther. The condition and nature of the Christian records will not allow us to go farther than this, and to be curious in particulars. Their legendary and mythical character does not warrant full confidence in their narrative. There are certain main features of doctrine in which the Evangelists and the Apostles all agree, though they differ in most other points.*

* The character of the record is such that I see not how any stress can be laid on particular actions attributed to Jesus. That he lived a divine life, suffered a violent death, taught and lived a most beautiful religion, — this seems the great fact about which a mass of truth and error has been collected. That he should gather disciples, be opposed by the Priests and Pharisees, have controversies with them, — this lay in the nature of things. His loftiest sayings seem to me the most likely to be genuine. The great stress laid on the person of Jesus by his followers, shows what the person must have been; — they put the person before the thing, the fact above the idea. But it is not about vulgar men that such mythical stories are told. See, who will, the recent literature on this subject, — Strauss, Leben Jesu, 4th ed. 1840; Hase, Leben Jesu, 3d ed. 1840; Theile, Zur Biographie Jesu, 1837; Weisse, Evangelische Geschichte, &c. 1838; Paulus, Leben Jesu, 1828; Gfrörer Urchristenthums, &c. 1830; Hennel, Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity, Lond. 1838; Harwood, German Anti-supernaturalism, Lond. 1840.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Now to leave out of mind the notions about Christianity which prevail in this or that church, age, council, or writer; to get clear of the peculiarities of this or that Apostle and Evangelist; to make a separation from the opinions of Jesus about prophecy, demonology, and other matters but accidentally connected with Religion; to take his own highest statement, the thing in which all the Evangelists and Apostles agree, and which has been the heart of the Christian movement,—we find the doctrine of Jesus is a simple thing: LOVE TO MAN—LOVE TO GOD. The whole of Christianity is summed up in these two elements,—its moral, its religious side, practical and contemplative. All the moral and religious teaching of Jesus,—the sermon on the mount, so called, the parables of the Synoptics, the discourses of John,—are but an amplification of these, an application of them to life; a statement of the blessedness of obedience, the sadness of disobeying. To take the account as it stands: A man asks what he shall do to fulfil the idea of man, and have "eternal life?" He bids him keep the moral law, written eternally in the nature of man; specifies some of its plainest prohibitions, and adds, "Love your neighbour as yourself." When asked the greatest commandment of the Law, he thus sums up all the Law, and the Prophets also: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt

love thy neighbour as thyself."* Here is the sum of Christian doctrine. He gives the highest aim for man—"Be perfect as God." He declares the blessedness, present and eternal, of such as do the Will of God—the Spirit of God shall be in them, revealing Truth; the kingdom of God shall be theirs. He gives no extended form of his views in Theology, Anthropology, Politics, or Philosophy. But the great truth of God's goodness, and man's spiritual nature, are implied in all his teachings. He dwells little on the Immortality of the Soul—much less than some "Heathens" before him; but it is everywhere implied. As the doctrine was familiar, he dwells little upon it.

In the course of his teaching, he dwells much upon sin, for it was all around him. Taking the highest view of man's nature, power, and duty, he must above all mourn at man's lot when not faithful, and call loudly on his brothers to flee from a state so sad. Matthew would make his first address to be, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."† He speaks of the change from sin to a divine life as a *new birth*,—a common expression, to denote the greatness of the change. He promises reconciliation with God, on condition of a new life.

He speaks of himself—if we may trust the words of the record so minutely—as the *life*, the *light*, the *only way* to salvation,—that is, the teacher who shows the only way. He considers himself as *sent* by God,—his doctrine and works not his own, but the Father's. Yet he never speaks of his connection with God as peculiar; never calls himself the Son of God in any sense wherein all good men are not

* Matth. xxii. 37, 39, and the parallels in Mark and Luke.

† This phrase, the *Kingdom of Heaven*, is one of no little ambiguity, and it is certainly possible that, like the Psalms of David, it meant one thing to the writer and another to us. In some places it certainly *cannot mean a state of rewards and punishments in another life*, even if it ever have this meaning. Can it be, that Jesus expected a visible kingdom on the earth?—or were his followers perpetually mistaking his meaning? There can be no doubt that the writers of the New Testament sometimes understood, by the *Kingdom of Heaven*, a local kingdom on the earth.

also sons of God; never speaks of his doctrines or his works as peculiar to himself, which others could not do and teach. He promises that his disciples shall do greater works than his; the Spirit of Truth shall teach them more than he had done. Since he never speaks of his relation to God as peculiar to himself, but on the contrary as shared by all; since he calls the peacemakers God's children; says the pure in heart, and all who are of God, shall see Him; that God abides in the hearts of all who love him; and since he defends his divine Son-ship on the ground that the Jewish Scripture calls men sons of God to whom the Word of God came,—it is plain that he represents himself as but the type of that relation which all good men sustain to God; that his strength, inspiration, exceeding tranquillity, his rest of soul, and union with God, are what all men may share.

To sum up the main points of the matter more briefly: In an age of gross wickedness, among a people arrogant, and proud of their descent from Abraham—a mythological character of some excellence; wedded to the ritual Law, which they professed to have received, by miracle from God, through Moses—another and greater mythological hero; in a nation of Monotheists, haughty yet cunning, morose, jealous, vindictive, loving the little corner of space called Judea above all the rest of the world, fancying themselves the "chosen people" and special favourites of God; in the midst of a nation wedded to their forms, sunk in ignorance, precipitated into sin, and, still more, expecting a Deliverer who would repel their political foes, reunite the scattered children of Jacob, and restore them to power, conquer all nations, reëstablish the formal service of the Temple in all its magnificent pomp, and exalt Jerusalem above all the cities of the earth forever;—amid all this, and the opposition it raised to a spiritual man, Jesus fell back on the moral and religious Sentiment in man; uttered their oracles

as the Infinite spoke through them; taught absolute Religion, absolute Morality—nothing less, nothing more; laid down principles wide as the Soul, true and eternal as God.*

Such, then, is the religious doctrine of Jesus. It was always taught with direct application to life—not as Science, but as daily Duty. Love of God was no abstraction. It implied love of Wisdom, Justice, Purity, Goodness, Holiness, Charity. To love these, is to love God; to *love* them, is to *live* them. It implies abhorrence of evil for its own sake; a desire and effort to be perfect as God, to have no wrong action, wrong thought, or wrong feeling; to make the heart right, the head right, the hand right; to serve God, not with the lips alone, but the life—not only in Jerusalem and Gerizim, but everywhere—not by tithing mint, anise and cummin, but by judgment, mercy and faith—not by saying "Lord! Lord!" "Save us, good Lord!" but by doing the Father's will. It implies a Faith that is stronger than Fear, prevails over every sorrow, grief, disappointment, and asks only this, "Thy will be done!"—a Love which is strongest in times of trouble—which never fails when human affection goes stooping and feeble, weeping its tears of blood; a Love which annihilates temptation, and in the hour of mortal agony brings a fair angel from the sky; an absolute trust in God, a brave unconcern for the morrow, so long as the day's duties are faithfully done. It is a love of Goodness and Religion for their own sake, not for the bribe of Heaven, or the dread of Hell. It implies a reunion of man and God, till we think God's thought, and will God's will, and so have God abiding in us, and become one with Him.

* In estimating the religious doctrine of Jesus, it should be remembered that the Synoptics had all strong Jewish prejudices, and therefore gave a *Jewish colouring to the doctrine of Jesus*, which does not appear so strongly in the fourth Gospel, or the writings of Paul. The careful interpreter will make allowance for this. But, after all, the question, Whether this or that historical person taught Absolute Religion, is of small consequence to the race.

The other doctrine, Love of Man, is love of all as yourself, not because they have no faults, but in spite thereof. To feel no enmity towards enemies—to labour for them with love—pray for them with pitying affection, remembering that the less they deserve, the more they need,—this was the doctrine of Love. It demands that the rich, the wise, the holy, help the poor, the foolish, the sinful; that the strong bear the burdens of the weak, not bind them anew. It tells a man that his excellence and ability are not for himself alone, but for all mankiud, of which he is but one, beginning first with the nearest of the needy. It makes the strong the guardians, not the tyrants of the weak. It said, "Go to the publicans and sinners, and call them to repentance;—go to men trodden down by the hoof of the oppressor; rebuke him lovingly, but snatch the spoil from his bloody teeth;—go to men sick with desolation, covered all over with the leprosy of sin, bowed together and squalid with their inveterate disease; bid them live and sin no more." It despairs of no man; sees the soul of goodness in things evil; knows that the soul in its intimate recess never consents to sin, nor loves the Hateful. It would improve men's circumstances to mend their heart—their heart to mend their circumstances. It does not say alone, with piteous whine, "God save the wicked and the weak," but puts its own shoulder to the work; divides its raiment, and shares its loaf.

To say all in brief, these two cardinal doctrines demanded a DIVINE LIFE, where every action of the hand, the head, the heart, is in obedience to the Law of the Soul—in harmony with the All-perfect. This was Christ's notion of worship. It asked for nothing ritual, formal; laid no stress on special days, forms, rites, creeds. Its rite, its creed, its substance and its form, are all contained in that one command, LOVE MAN AS YOURSELF; GOD ABOVE ALL.

Thus far the application was universal as the doctrine.

But he taught something which is ritual—*Baptism and the Supper.* The first was a common rite at the time, used even by the "heathens." In a nation dwelling in a warm climate, and so fond of symbols as the Jews, it was a natural expression of the convert's change of life. Sensual men must interpret their Religion to the senses,—as the Hollanders have their Bible in Dutch. It seems to have been an accommodation to the wants of the times, as he spoke the popular language. In the same spirit he keeps the Passover, and bids the restored leper offer the customary sacrifice. Did he lay any stress on this watery dispensation? count it valuable of itself? Then we must drop a tear for the weakness; for no outward act can change the heart, and God is not to be mocked, pleased, or served with a form. Is there any reason to suppose he ever designed it to be permanent? It is indeed said that he bade the disciples teach all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost."* But since the Apostles never mention the command, nor the forms, since it is opposite to the general spirit of his precepts, it must be put with the many other things which are to be examined with much care before they are referred to him. But if it came from him, we can only say, There is no perfect Guide but the Father.

The second form,—was it of more account than the first? Who shall tell us the "Lord's Supper" was designed to be permanent more than washing the feet,—which the Pope likewise imitates? Did he place any value on the dispensation of wine? design it to extend beyond the company then present? If we may trust the account, he asks his friends, at supper, to remember him, when they break bread;—it was simple, natural, affectionate, beautiful. Was this a foundation of a form to last forever—a form valuable in itself, essential to man's spiritual welfare—a form pleasing

* Matth. xxviii. 19, and the parallels.

to Him who is All in All? To say Jesus laid any stress on it as a valuable and perpetual rite, is to go beyond what is written;—it needs no reply. The thing may be useful, beautiful, comforting to a million souls; truly it *has* been so. In Christianity there is milk for babes and meat for men, that the truth may be given as they can receive it. Let each be fed with the Father's bounty.

Thus the dispensations of water and of wine are, perhaps, the only limitations set to the universal application of his great doctrines; and if the above views are correct, the limitation does not come from Jesus, and these forms are no more essential or valuable in themselves, no more designed to be permanent, than the Syro-Chaldaic tongue in which he spoke. Christianity having no forms essential, can accommodate itself to all; but these being its only sensuous appendages, no wonder sensual men cling to them, as the fetichist to his idol, the polytheist to his sacrifice. Render unto the senses what is theirs, and to the soul its own.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS, ITS REAL AND PRETENDED SOURCE.

On what authority did Jesus teach? On that of the most high God, as he expressly states, and often. But to have the authority of God,—is not that miraculous? How can man have God's authority in a natural way? Let us look at the matter.

I. THE ONLY AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIANITY IS ITS TRUTH.

Truth is the relation of things as they are; falsehood as they are not. No doctrine can have a higher condemnation than to be convicted of falsehood; none a higher authority than to be proved true. God is the author of things as they are; therefore of this relation, and therefore of *Truth*. He that delivers the Truth, then, has so far the authority of Truth's God. Then it will be asked, How do we know Christianity is true, or that it is our duty to love man and God? Now when it is asked, How I do know that I exist; that doubting is doubting; that half is less than the whole; that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be? the questioner is set down as a strange man. But it has somehow come to pass, that he is reckoned a very acute and Christian person who doubts moral and religious axioms, and asks, How do I know that right is right, and wrong wrong, and goodness good? Alas! there are men among

the Christians who place virtue and religion on a lower ground than Aristippus and Democritus, men branded as Heathens and Atheists. Let us know what we are about.

It was said above,* there are, practically, *four* sources of knowledge,—direct and indirect, primary and secondary,—namely, *perception* for sensible things, *intuition* for spiritual things, *reflection* for logical things, and *testimony* for historical things. If the doctrines of Christianity are eternal truths, they are not *sensible* things, not *historical* things, and of course do not depend on sensual perception, nor historical testimony, but can be presented directly to the consciousness of men at one age as well as another; and thus, if they are matters of *reflection*, may be made plain to all who have the reflective faculty, and will use it; if they are matters of *intuition*, to all who have the intuitive faculty, and will let it act. Now the duty we owe to man, that of loving him as ourselves—the duty we owe to God, that of loving Him above all, is a matter of intuition; it proceeds from the very nature of man, and is inseparable from that nature; we recognize the truth of the precept as soon as it is stated, and see the truth of it as soon as the unprejudiced mind looks that way. It is no less a matter of reflection likewise. He that reflects on the Idea of God as given by intuition, on his own nature as he learns it from his mental operations, sees that this two-fold duty flows logically from these premises. The truth of these doctrines, then, may be known by both intuition and reflection. He that teaches a doctrine eternally true, does not set forth a private and peculiar thing resting on private authority and historical evidence, but an everlasting reality, which rests on the ground of all truth, the public and eternal authority of unchanging God. A false doctrine is not of God; it has no background of Godhead. It rests on the authority of Simon Peter or Simon Magus; of him that sets it forth; it

* Book III. Ch. II.

is his private, personal property. When the Devil speaks a lie, he speaketh of his own; but when a Son of God speaks the truth, he speaks not his own word but the Father's. Shall man indorse God's word to make it current?

Again, if the truth of these doctrines rest on the personal authority of Jesus, it was not a duty to observe them before he spoke; for he being the cause, or indispensable occasion of the duty, to make the cause precede the effect is an absurdity too great for modern divines. Besides, if it depends on Jesus, it is not eternally true; a religious doctrine that was not true and binding yesterday, may become a lie again by to-morrow; if not eternally true, it is no truth at all: absolute truth is the same always and everywhere. Personal authority adds nothing to a mathematical demonstration; can it more to a moral intuition? Can authority alter the relation of things? A voice speaking from Heaven, and working more wonders than Æsop and the saints, or Moses and the Sibyl relate, cannot make it our duty to hate God, or man; no such voice can add any new obligation to the law God wrote in us.

When it is said that these doctrines of Christianity, like the truths of Science, rest on their own authority, or that of unchanging God, they are then seen to stand on the highest and safest ground that is possible—the ground of absolute truth. Then if all the Evangelists and Apostles were liars; if Jesus was mistaken in a thousand things; if he were a hypocrite; yes, if he never lived, but the New Testament were a sheer forgery from end to end,—these doctrines are just the same, absolute truth. But, on the other hand, if these depend on the infallible authority of Jesus,—then, if he were mistaken in any one point, his authority is gone in all; if the Evangelists were mistaken in any one point, we can never be certain we have the words of Jesus in a particular case; and then where is "historical Christianity?" Now it is a most notorious fact that the Apostles and Evangelists were greatly mistaken in some points. It is easy to

show, if we have the exact words of Jesus, that he was mistaken in some points—in the interpretation of the Old Testament, in the doctrine of demons, in the celebrated prediction of his second coming and the end of the world within a few years. If Christianity rest on his authority, and that alone, it falls when the foundation falls, and that stands at the mercy of a schoolboy. If he is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to him the true riches?

II. OF THE AUTHORITY DERIVED FROM THE ALLEGED MIRACLES OF JESUS.

Of late years it has been unpopular with divines to rest the authority of Christianity on its truth, and not its truth on its authority. It must be confessed there is some inconvenience in the case; for if this method of trusting Truth alone, and not Authority, be followed, by-and-by some things which have much Authority and no Truth to support them, may come to the ground. The same thing took place in the middle ages, when Abelard looked into Theology, explaining and defending some of the doctrines of the Church by Reason. The Church said, "If you commend the Reasonable as such, you must condemn the Not-Reasonable, —and then where are we?" A significant question truly. So the Church "cried out upon him" as a heretic because he trusted Reason more than a blind belief in the traditions of men, which the Church has long had the impudence to call "Faith in God." It is often said, in our times, that Christianity rests on miracles; that the authority of the miracle-worker authenticates his doctrine; if a teacher can raise the dead, he must have a commission from God to teach true doctrine; his word is the standard of truth. Here the fact and the value of miracles are both *assumed* outright. Now if it could be shown that Christianity rested on Miracles, or had more or less connection with them, it

yet proves nothing *peculiar* in the case; for other religions, —fetichistic, polytheistic, and monotheistic,—appeal to the same authority. If a nation is rude and superstitious, the claim to miracles is the more common—their authority the greater.* To take the popular notion, the Jewish Religion began in miracles, was continued, and will end in miracles. The Mahometan tells us the Koran is a miracle; that its author had miraculous inspiration, visions, and revelations. The writings of the Greeks, the Romans, the Scandinavians and the Hindoos, the Chinese and Persians, are full of miracles. In Fetichism all is miracle, and its authority, therefore, the best in the world. The Catholic Church and the latter-day saints still claim the power of working them, and, therefore, of authenticating whatever they will, if a miracle have the alleged virtue. Now in resting Christianity on this basis, we must do one of two things: either, first, we must admit that Christianity rests on the same foundation with the lowest Fetichism, but has less divine authority than the latter,—for if miracles constitute the authority, then that is the best form of Religion which counts the most miracles; or, secondly, we must deny the reality of all miracles except the Christian, in order to give exclusive sway to Christianity. But the devotees of each other form will retort the denial, and claim exclusive credence for their favourite wonders. The serious inquirer will ask, "If such be the Evidence, what is Truth, and how shall I get at it?" And if he does not stop for a time in scepticism, at best in indifference, why he is a very rare man. In this state of the case, theologians have felt bound, in logic, either to prove the superiority of Christian miracles, or to deny all other miracles. The first method is not possible,—the Hindoo

* See a curious story respecting an Eastern Calif and his decision between the conflicting claims of the Christians and Mahometans, in Marco Polo, ed. Marsden, Book I. ch. viii. p. 67–69. See also Book II. ch. ii. p. 275, *et seq.*; Book III. ch. xx. § 4, p. 648, *et seq.* See the numerous miracles collected by Valerius Maximus in his treatise De Prodigiis, Opp. ed. Hase, Vol. I. Lib. I. ch. vi.; De Somniis, ch. vii.; De Miraculis, ch. viii.; Spencer's Discourse concerning Prodigies, Lond. 1665.

Priest surpasses the Christian in the number and magnitude and antiquity of his miracles. The second, therefore, is the only method left. Accordingly most ingenious attempts have been made to devise some test which will spare the Christian, and condemn all other miracles. The Protestant saves only those mentioned in the Bible; the Catholic, more consistently, thinks the faculty *immanent* in the Church, and claims miracles down to the present day. But all these attempts to establish a suitable criterion have been fruitless, and even worse, sometimes exposing more than the folly of their authors.* However, they who argue from the miracles alone, assume two things: first, that miracles prove the divinity of a doctrine; secondly, that they were wrought in connection with the Christian doctrine. If one ask proof of these significant premises, it is not easy to come by. This subject of miracles demands a careful attention. Here are two questions to be asked: first, Are miracles possible?—second, Did they actually occur in the case of Christianity?

1. *Are Miracles Possible?*

The answer depends on the definition of the term. The point we are to reason from is the Idea of God, who must be the cause of the miracle. Now a miracle is one of three things:—1. It is *a transgression of all Law which God has made;* or, 2. *A transgression of all known laws, but obedience to a law which we may yet discover;* or, 3. *A transgression of all law known or knowable by man, but yet in conformity with some law out of our reach.*

1. To take the first definition: A miracle is not possible, as it involves a contradiction. The Infinite God must have made the most perfect laws admissible in the nature of things; it is absurd and self-contradictory to suppose the

* See Douglas's Criterion, or Miracles Examined, Lond. 1754, and Leslie's Short Method with the Deists. See an ingenious illustration of the folly of one of Leslie's canons, in Palfrey, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 150, Note 11.

reverse. But if His laws are perfect, and the nature of things unchangeable, why should he alter these laws? The change can be only for the worse. To suppose he does this, is to accuse God of caprice. If He be the ultimate cause of the phenomena of the universe, to suppose in a given case that he changes these phenomena, is either to make God fickle, and therefore not worthy to be relied on; or else inferior to nature, of which he is yet the cause.

2. To take the second definition: It is no miracle at all, but simply an act which at first we cannot understand and refer to the process of its causation. The most common events, such as growth, vitality, sensation, affection, thought, are miracles. Besides, the miracle is of a most fluctuating character. The miracle-worker of to-day is a matter-of-fact juggler to-morrow. The explosion of gunpowder, the production of magnified images of any object, the phenomena of mineral and animal magnetism, are miracles in one age, but common things in the next; such wonders prove only the skill of the performer. Science each year adds new wonders to our store. The master of a locomotive steam-engine would have been thought greater than Jupiter Tonans or the Elohim thirty centuries ago.

3. To take the third hypothesis: There is no antecedent objection, nor metaphysical impossibility in the case. Finite man not only does not, but *cannot* understand all the modes of God's action—all the laws of His Being. There may be higher beings, to whom God reveals himself in modes that we can never know; for we cannot tell the secrets of God, nor determine *à priori* the modes of his manifestation. In this sense a miracle is possible; the world is a perpetual miracle of this sort. Nature is the Art of God; can we understand it? Life, Being, Creation, Duration; do we understand these actual things? How then can we say to the Infinite, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; there are no more ways wherein thy Being acts?" Man is in nowise the measure of God.

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2. Did Miracles occur in the case of Christianity?

This question is purely historical,—to be answered like all other historical questions, by competent testimony. Have we testimony adequate to prove the fact?

Antecedent to all experience, one empirical thing is as probable as another. To the first man, with no experience, birth from one parent is no more surprising than birth from two; to feed five men with five ship-loads of corn, or five thousand with five loaves; the reproduction of an arm, or a finger nail; the awaking from a four days' death, or a four hours' sleep; to change water into wine, or mineral coal into burning gas; the descent into the sea, or the ascent into the sky; the prediction of a future, or the memory of a past event;—all are alike—one as credible as the other. But to take our past experience of the nature of things, the case wears a different aspect. We demand more evidence for a strange than for a common thing. From the very constitution of the mind, a prudent man supposes that the Laws of Nature continue; that the same cause produces always the same effects, if the circumstances remain the same. If it were related to us, by four strangers who had crossed the ocean in the same vessel, that a man, now in London, cured diseases, opened the blind eyes, restored the wasted limb, and raised men from the dead—all by a mere word; that he himself was born miraculously, and attended by miracles all his life,—who would believe the story? We should be justified in demanding a large amount of the most unimpeachable evidence. This opinion is confirmed by the doubt of scientific men in respect of animal magnetism, where no law is *violated*, but a faculty hitherto little noticed is disclosed. Now if we look after the *facts* of the case, we find the evidence for the Christian miracles is very scanty in extent, and very uncertain in character. We must depend on the testimony of the epistolary and the historical books of the New Testament.

Now it is a notorious fact that the genuine Epistles, the earliest Christian documents, make no mention of any miracles performed by Jesus; and when we consider the character of Paul, his strong love of the marvellous, the manner in which he dwells on the appearance of Jesus to him after death, it seems surprising, if he believed the other miracles, that he does not allude to them. To examine the testimony of the Gospels: Two profess to contain the evidence of eye-witnesses. But we are not certain these books came in their present shape from John and Matthew; it is certain they were not written till long after the events related. But still more, each of them relates what the writers could not have been witness to; so we may have nothing but hearsay and conjecture. Besides, these authors shared the common prejudice of their times, and disagree one with the other. The Gospels of Mark and Luke—who were not eye-witnesses—in some points corroborate the testimony of John and Matthew; in others, add nothing. But there are still other accounts—the Apocryphal Gospels —some of them perhaps older than the Gospels of Matthew and John, and these make the case worse by disclosing the fondness for miracles that marked the Christians of that early period. Taking all these things into consideration, and remembering that in many respects the three first Gospels are but one witness, adding the current belief of the times in favour of miracles, the evidence to prove their historical reality is almost nothing, admitting we have the genuine books of the disciples; it is, at best, such evidence as would not be considered of much value in a court of justice. However, the absence of testimony does not prove that miracles were *not* performed, for a universal negative of this character cannot be proved.*

* See some just remarks in Hennell, *ubi sup.* ch. viii.; Strauss, Leben Jesu, § 1–15, § 90–103, § 132–139; Glaubenslehre, § 17; and on the other hand, Neander and Tholuck.

If one were to look carefully at the evidence in favour of the Christian miracles, and proceed with the caution of a true inquirer, he must come to the conclusion, I think, that they cannot be admitted as facts. The Resurrection — a miracle alleged to be wrought *upon* Jesus, not *by* him, — has more evidence than any other, for it is attested by the Epistles, as well as the Gospels, and was one corner-stone of the Christian church. But here, is the testimony sufficient to show that a man thoroughly dead as Abraham and Isaac were, came back to life, passed through closed doors, and ascended into the sky? I cannot speak for others —but most certainly I cannot believe such facts on such evidence.

There is far more testimony to prove the fact of miracles, witchcraft, and diabolical possessions, in times comparatively modern, than to prove the Christian miracles. It is well known that the most credible writers among the early Christians, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret and others, believed that the miraculous power continued in great vigour in their time.* But to come down still later, the case of St. Bernard of Clairvaux is more to the point. He lived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. His life has been written in part by William, Abbot of St. Thierry; Ernald, Abbot of Bonevaux; and Geoffrey, Abbot of Igny; "all eye-witnesses of the saint's actions." Another life was written by Alanus, Bishop of Auxerre, and still another by John the Hermit, not long after the death of Bernard, both his contemporaries. Besides, there are three books on his miracles, one by Philip of Clairvaux, another by the monks of that place, and a third by the above-mentioned Geoffrey. He cures the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the blind, men pos-

* On this subject of the miraculous power in the early Church, see the celebrated treatise of Middleton, A free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers in the Christian Church, &c., Lond. 1749, in his Works, Lond. 1752, Vol. I. See Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Part I. ch. i. § 8, and Murdock's note. The testimony of Chrysostom is fluctuating. See above, Vol. I. p. 105, *et seq.*

sessed with devils, in many cases before multitudes of people. He wrought thirty-six miracles in a single day, says one of these historians; converted men and women that could not understand the language he spoke in. His wonders are set down by the eye-witnesses themselves, men known to us by the testimony of others.* I do not hesitate in saying that there is far more evidence to support the miracles of St. Bernard than those mentioned in the New Testament.

But we are to accept such testimony with great caution. The tendency of men to believe that the thing happens which they expect to happen; the tendency of rumour to exaggerate a real occurrence into a surprising or miraculous affair, is well known. A century and a half have not gone by since witches were tried by a special court in Massachusetts, convicted by a jury of twelve good men and true; preached against by the clergy, and executed by the common hangman. Any one who looks carefully and without prejudice into the matter, will see, I think, more evidence for the reality of those "wonders of the invisible world" than for the Christian miracles. Here is the testimony of scholars, clergymen, witnesses examined under oath, jurymen, and judges; the confession of honest men—of persons whose character is well known at the present day, to prove the reality of witchcraft and the actual occurrence of miraculous facts—of the interference of powers more than human in the affairs of the world.† The appearance of the Devil

* See these books in Mabillon's edition of Bernard, Paris, 1721, Vol. II. p. 1071, *et seq.* See Fleury, Histoire Ecclesiastique, Liv. LXVI. *et seq.*, and especially LXIX. ch. xvii., ed. Nismes, 1779, Vol. X. p. 147, *et seq.*, where is a summary of some of his most important miracles. See also Les Vies des Saints, Paris, 1701, Vol. II. p. 288–326; Butler's Lives of the Saints, Lond. 1815, Vol. VIII. p. 227–274; Milner's History of the Church of Christ, &c. Vol. III.; Christian Examiner for March 1841, Art. I.

† See, who will, Cotton Mather's Wonders of the Invisible World, Boston, 1693; and Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience, &c., and the learned authors in Diabology therein cited. See also Hale's modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft, &c., Boston, 1702; Calef, More Wonders from the Invisible World, London, 1700; Upham's Lectures on Witchcraft, &c.; Chandler's Criminal Trials, p. 65, *et seq.*; Bancroft, *ubi sup.*, ch. xix. See many curious particulars in Hutchison's Essay concerning Witchcraft, &c., second edition, London, 1720.

as a "little black man;" of spectres and ghosts; the power of witches to ride through the air, overturn a ship, raise storms, and torture men at a distance; is attested by a cloud of witnesses, perfectly overshadowing to a man of easy faith.* In the celebrated case of Richard Dugdale, the "Surey Demoniack," or "Surey Impostor,"† which occurred in the latter part of the seventeenth century, in England, and was a most notorious affair, we have the testimony of *nine dissenting clergymen*, all of them familiar with the "Demoniack," to prove his diabolical miracles; and also *the depositions of many "credible persons,"* sworn to before two magistrates, to confirm the wonder. Yet it turned out at last that there was no miracle in the case.‡ It is needless to mention the "miracles" wrought at the tomb of the Abbé de Paris during the last century, or those of Father Mathew in Ireland, and the Mormonites in New England. A miracle is never looked for but it comes. No man can say there was not *something* at the bottom of the Christian "miracles," and of witchcrafts and possessions — perhaps something not yet fully understood; but to suppose, on such evidence, that God departed from the usual law of the world in these cases, is not very rational;—to say the least, to insist that a belief in such miracles is es-

* Henry More has made a pretty collection of cases out of authors now forgotten, in Antidote against Atheism, Book III. ch. i.-xiv., Appendix, ch. xii. xiii.; Immortalitas Animæ, Lib. II. ch. xv.-xvii.; Lib. III. ch. iv.; — see his Enchiridion Metaphysicum, Pars I. ch. xxvi.

† "The Surey Demoniack, or an Account of Satan's Strange and Dreadful Actings in and about the Body of Richard Dugdale," &c. &c., London, 1697.

‡ See Taylor's "The Devil turned Casuist," &c., London, 1697; "Lancashire Levite Rebuked," 1698; and "The Surey Impostor." The latter I copy from citations in "A Vindication of the Surey Demoniack," &c., London, 1698. Such as wish to see melancholy specimens of human folly may consult also Barrow's "The Lord's Arm stretched out," &c. &c., London, 1664; "The Second Part of the Boy of Bilson," &c. &c., London, 1698; "A Relation of the Diabolical Practices of above twenty Witches of Renfreu, &c., contained in their tryals, &c., and for which several of them have been executed this present year, 1697," London, 1697; "Sadducismus Debellatus, Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts of the Devil upon Mrs. Christian Shaw, &c. of Renfreu," &c., London, 1698. Howell estimates that thirty thousand suffered death for Witchcraft, in England, during one hundred and fifty years. State Trials, Vol. II. p. 1051, as cited by Chandler, *ubi supra*, p. 69.

sential to Christiany, is a poor evidence of a man's knowledge of God!

But now, admitting in argument that Jesus wrought all the miracles alleged, that his birth and resurrection were both miraculous, that he was the only person endowed with such miraculous power,—it does not follow that he shall teach true doctrine. Must a revealer of transient miracles to the sense, necessarily be a revealer of eternal truth to the soul? It follows no more than the reverse. But admit it in argument;—then he must never be mistaken in the smallest particular. But this is contrary to fact; for, if we may trust the record, he taught that he should appear again after his ascension, and that the world would end in that age.

Practically speaking, a miracle is a most dubious thing; in this case, its proof the most uncertain. But on the supposition that our conviction of the truth of Christianity rests on the fact that Christ wrought the alleged miracles, then is Christianity itself a most uncertain thing; we in this age can never be so sure of Religion, though our soul testify to its truth, as the old Jews, who rejected Christianity, and yet had their senses to testify to the miracles. If the proof of Christianity be the sensations of the Evangelists, we can be no more certain of its truth than of the fact that Jesus had no human father!

But this question of miracles, whether true or false, is of no religious significance. When Mr. Locke said the doctrine proved the miracles, not the miracles the doctrine, he admitted their worthlessness. They can be useful only to such as deny our internal power of discerning truth.*

* "Let us see how far inspiration can enforce on the mind any opinion concerning God or his worship, when accompanied with a power to do a miracle; and here, too, I say, the last determination must be that of reason. 1. Because *reason must be the judge what is a miracle, and what is not*, which—not knowing how far the power of natural causes do extend themselves, and what strange effects they may produce—is very hard to determine. 2. *It will always be as great a miracle that God should alter the course of natural things*, as overturn the principles of knowledge and understanding in a man, by setting up anything to be received by him as a truth which his

Now the doctrine of Christianity is eternally true; it requires only to be understood to be accepted. It is a matter of direct and positive knowledge, dependent on no outside authority; while the Christian miracles are, at best, but a matter of testimony, and therefore of secondary and indirect knowledge. The thing to be proved is notoriously true; the alleged means of proof notoriously uncertain. Is it not better, then, to proceed to Christianity at once? for when this is admitted to be as true as the demonstrations and axioms of science—as much a matter of certainty as the consciousness of our existence, then miracles are of no value; they may be interesting to the historian, the antiquary, or physiologist, not to us as Christians. They now hang as a millstone about the neck of many a pious man, who can believe in Christianity, but not in the transformation of water to wine, or the resurrection of a dead body.

Jesus, then, is not the author of Christianity, but its revealer—not its sanction and authority, but the messenger through whom God spoke it to mankind. We verify its eternal truth in our soul. The pure water of life must come from the well of God; if it be this, it matters not through what channel it comes. Let it be shown, if it can be, that the Gospels are false, and Jesus mistaken,—still Christianity is eternally true, if it be the Absolute Religion: if not this, we need none of it.

reason cannot assent to, *as the miracle itself;* and *so at best it will be but one miracle against another, and the greater still on reason's side;* it being harder to believe that God should alter and put out of its ordinary course some phenomenon of the great world for once, and make things act contrary to their ordinary rule, purposely, that the mind of man might do so always afterwards, than that this is some fallacy or natural effect, of which he knows not the cause, let it look never so strange. I do not hereby deny in the least, that God can do, or hath done, miracles for the confirmation of truth; but I only say that we cannot think he should do them to enforce doctrines or notions of himself or any worship of him not conformable to reason, or that we can receive such for truth for the miracle's sake; and even in those books which have the greatest proof of revelation from God, and the attestation of miracles to confirm their being so, *the miracles are to be judged by the doctrine, and not the doctrine by the miracle.*"—King's Life of Locke, Vol. I. p. 231, *et seq.*

CHAPTER V.

THE ESSENTIAL PECULIARITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CHRISTIANITY agrees generically with all other forms in this, that it is a Religion. Its peculiarity is not in its doctrine of one Infinite God, of the immortality of man, nor of future retribution. It is not in particular rules of morality; for precepts as true and beautiful may be found in Heathen writers, who give us the same view of man's nature, duty, and destination. The great doctrines of Christianity were known long before Christ; for God did not leave man four thousand years unable to find out his plainest duty. There is no precept of Jesus, no real duty commanded, no promise offered, no sanction held out, which cannot be paralleled by similar precepts in heathen writers before him;—the pure in heart saw God before as well as after him. Every imperfect form of Religion was, more or less, an anticipation of Christianity. So far as a man has real Religion, so far he has Christianity. This is as old as the human race.* By its light Zoroaster, Confucius, Socrates, with many millions of holy souls, walked in the early times of the world; by this they were cheered when their souls were bowed down, and they knew not which way to turn. They and their kindred, like Moses, were schoolmasters to prepare the world for Christianity—shadows of good things to come,

* See Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation, &c.

the dayspring from on high, the Bethlehem star announcing the Perfect Religion which was to follow. Modern Christians love to deny that there are points of agreement between Christianity and its predecessors;—the early apologists took just the opposite course.

Now Christianity really differs specifically from all other forms of Religion in this respect: it is ABSOLUTE RELIGION and ABSOLUTE MORALITY. As Science neglects the transient things of nature, and builds up her system of Truths on what is permanent therein; so Christianity, neglecting what varies from age to age and person to person, is based on what is Universal and Permanent in Man. From this capital distinction there proceed several subordinate differences.

1. It differs *in regard to the point whence it sets out.* They start from something bounded and definite. Judaism and Mahometanism, each sets out from the alleged words of one man, which are made the only measure of Truth for the whole human race. There can be no progress; the devotee of Judaism or Mahometanism must logically believe his form of Religion perpetual;—so if a man teach what is hostile to it, he must be put to death, though his doctrine be true.

Christianity sets out from nothing external and limited, but from the Spirit of God in the soul of man, speaking through Reason, Conscience, and the religious Sentiment; its SOURCE, therefore, is the Absolute. Other forms of Religion depend on a transient and finite person; this on the Infinite God. Whatever is consistent with Reason, Conscience, and the religious Sentiment, is consistent with Christianity; all else is hostile. Whoever obeys these three oracles is *essentially* a Christian, though he lived ten thousand years before Christ, or, living now, does not own his name. Let men improve in Reason, Conscience, Religion —in what most becomes a man—they outgrow each other

form of worship; they pass by all that rests on historical things, signs, wonders, miracles—all that does not rest on the eternal God, ever acting in man; yet they are not the farther from Christianity, but all the nearer, by this change. These things are left behind, as the traveller leaves the mire and stones of the road he travels, and shakes off the dust of his garments as he approaches some queenly city throned amid the hills, and looks back with sorrow on the crooked way he has traversed, where others drag still their slow and lingering length along. Men must come to Christianity when they come to real manly excellence. Is not this the meaning of the words, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by me;" and of the many kindred passages in the most spiritual of the Gospels? No friend of Religion and of man can be hostile to the Christianity of Christ. This proposes no partial end, but an absolute OBJECT—the perfection of man, or oneness with God. Therefore it leaves man perfect freedom; the liberty that comes of obedience to the Law of the Spirit of Life. All other forms of worship, ancient and modern, confine men in a dungeon; make them think the same thought, and speak the same word, and worship in the same way: Christianity gives them the range of the world, scope and verge enough. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is LIBERTY; the liberty of perfect obedience; the largest liberty of the sons of God. Reason and Love are hostile to a limited religion, which says, "Believe, Believe;" they welcome the Religion of Jesus, which says, "Be perfect as God."

2. A second peculiarity is this: *It is not a System of theological or moral doctrines, but a Method of Religion and Life.* It lays down no positive creed to be believed in, commands no positive action to be done; it would make the man perfectly obedient to God, leaving his thoughts and actions for Reason and Conscience to govern. It widens the sphere of thought and life; it reaffirms the great

religious truths implied in man's nature, shows their practical application and its result. A religious system, with its forms, ritual, creeds, lops off the sacred peculiarities of individual character; chains Reason, and fetters the will; seeks to unite men in arbitrary creeds and forms—where the union can be but superficial and worthless—and it lays stress on externals. Christianity insists on rightness before God; ties no man down to worship in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem; on the first day of the week, or the last day; in the church, or the fields; socially, or in private; with a creed, ritual, priest, symbol, spoken prayer, or without these. It breaks every yoke, seen or invisible; bids man worship in spirit and in truth. It does not ask a man to call himself a Christian, or his Religion Christianity; it bids him be perfect;—never says to Reason, "Thus far and no farther;" forbids no freedom of inquiry, nor wide reach of thought; fears nothing from the Truth, or for it. It never encourages that cowardice of soul which dares not think, nor look facts in the face, but sneaks behind altars, texts, tradition, because they are of the fathers; that cowardice which counts a mistake of the apostles better than truth in you and me, and which reads both Piety and Common Sense out of its church, because they will not bow the knee nor say the creed. Christianity asks no man to believe the Old Testament, or the New Testament, the divine infallibility of Moses or Jesus; but to prove all things; hold fast what is good; do the will of the Father; love man and God.

The method of Christianity is a very plain one: Obedience, not to that old teacher, or this new one; but to God, who filleth all in all; to His Law written on the tablets of the heart. Its METHOD, therefore, like its SOURCE and its OBJECT and its AIM, is absolute—the method of God revealed in the law of the Soul. It exhorts men to a divine life, not as something foreign, but as something native and welcome to man. It is the LIFE of many Systems of Reli-

gion, Theology, and practical Morality, as the ocean has many waves and bubbles: but these are not Christianity, more than a wreath of foam is the Atlantic.

3. It differs from others in its *eminently practical character.* Since Christianity is the absolute Religion, starts from the absolute *source,* proposes an absolute *object,* pursues the absolute *method,* it must lay most stress on things most valuable. Hence it counts a DIVINE LIFE better than saying "Lord, Lord;" puts mercy before sacrifice, and pronounces a gift to man better than a gift to God. It dwells much on the brotherhood of men; annihilates national and family distinctions: all are sons of God, and brothers; man is to love his brother as himself, and bless him, and thus serve God. It values man above all things. Is he poor, weak, ignorant, sinful? it does not scorn him, but labours all the more to relieve the fallen; it sees the "archangel ruined" in the sickly servant of Sin. It looks on the immortal nature of man, and all little distinctions vanish. It bids each man labour for his brother, and never give over till Ignorance, Want, and Sin are banished from the earth; to count a brother's sufferings, sorrows, wrongs, as our sufferings, sorrows and wrongs, and redress them. It says, "Carry the Truth to all." Before Jesus, the Greek, the Roman, and the Jew went to other lands to learn their arts, customs, and laws, study their religion. Who ever went to teach religion, not for his own, but his brother's sake? History is silent.

Christianity allows no man to sever himself from the race, making this world an Inn for him to take his ease. It does nothing for God's sake, each for its own sake; sends the devotee from his prayers to make peace with his brother; does not rob a man's father to enrich God, nor fancy that He needs anything—sacrifice, creeds, fasts, or prayers. It makes worship consist in being good, and doing good; faith within and works without; the test of greatness the amount of good done. Thus it is not a Religion of tem-

ples, days, ceremonies, but of the street, the fire-side, the field-side. Its temple is all space; its worship in spirit and truth; its ceremony a good life, blameless and beautiful; its priest the Spirit of God in the soul; its altar a heart undefiled. It places duty above cant. It promises as the result of obedience—oneness with God, and inspiration from Him. It offers no substitute for this, for nothing can do the work of Goodness and Piety but Goodness and Piety. It offers no magic to wipe sin out of the soul, and insure the rewards of Religion without sharing its fatigues; knows nothing of vicarious goodness. Its Heaven is doing God's will now and forever; thus it makes no antithesis between this and the next life. It puts nothing between man and God; makes Jesus our friend, not our master—a teacher who blesses, not a tyrant who commands us—a brother who pleads with us, not an Attorney who pleads with God—still less a sacrifice for sins he never committed, and therefore could not expiate.

These are not the peculiarities oftenest insisted on and taught as Christianity; it is not the mystery, the miraculous birth, the incarnation, the God-man, the miracles, the fulfilment of prophecy, the transfiguration, the atonement, the resurrection, the angels, the ascension, the "five points;" other religions have enough of such things—but it is the ABSOLUTE RELIGION in Christianity that is peculiar. Notwithstanding the anticipation of the doctrines of Jesus centuries before him, Christianity was a new thing; new in its spirit; proved new by the LIFE it wakened in the world.* Alas! such is not the Christianity of the Church at this day, nor at any day since the crucifixion;—but is it not the Christianity of Christ, the one only Religion, everlasting, ever blessed?

* See the Critical and Miscellaneous Works of Theodore Parker, Boston, 1843, Articles I. and X.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF JESUS OF NAZARETH.

REVERENCE and Tradition have woven about Jesus such a shining veil, that with the imperfect and doubtful materials in our hands it is not easy to determine, in detail and with minuteness, the character that moved and lived among his fellow-men, and commenced what may be called the Christian movement. The difficulty is two-fold: to get rid of traditional prejudice, and to get at the facts. Perhaps it is impossible to separate the pure fact from the legendary and mythological drapery that surrounds it. Besides, the Gospels pretend to cover but a few months of his active life. Still some conclusion may be reached. From Christianity we have separated the life and character of Jesus, that we might try the doctrine by absolute Religion: it now remains to examine the life of the man by the standard himself has given.

I. THE NEGATIVE SIDE, OR THE LIMITATIONS OF JESUS.

It is apparent that Jesus shared the erroneous notions of the times respecting devils, possessions, and demonology in general. If we may credit the Evangelists, he was in error on these points. But he never set up for a teacher of physiology. The acceptance of this popular error is no impeachment of his moral and religious excellence, no more than

ignorance of the steam-engine. The errors of great men are the glory of dunces; but of dunces alone.

He was mistaken in his interpretation of the Old Testament, if we may take the word of the Gospels. But if he supposed that the writers of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophecies, spoke of him—if he applied their poetic figures to himself, it is yet but a trifling mistake, affecting a man's head, not his heart. It is no more necessary for Jesus than for Luther to understand all ancient literature, and be familiar with criticism and antiquities, though with men who think Religion rests on his infallibility, it must be indeed a very hard case for their belief in Christianity.

Sometimes he is said to be an enthusiast, who hoped to found a visible kingdom in Judea by miraculous aid, as the prophets had distinctly foretold their "Messiah" should do; that he should be a King on earth, and that his disciples also, not forgetting Judas, should sit on twelve thrones and judge the restored tribes; that he should return in the clouds. Certainly a strong case, very strong, may be made out from the Synoptics to favour this charge. But what then? Even if the fact were admitted, and the dull Evangelists have not thrust their own fancies into his mouth, it does not militate against his morality and religion. How many a saint has been mistaken in such matters! His honesty, zeal, self-sacrifice, heavenly purity, still shine out in every word and work of his life.*

Another charge sometimes brought against him, and the only one at all affecting his moral and religious character, is this,—that he denounces his opponents in no measured terms; calls the Pharisees "hypocrites" and "children of the devil." We cannot tell how far the historians have added to the fierceness of this invective, but the general fact must

* On this point see, who will, the charges against Jesus in the Wolfenbüttel Fragmente; in the writings of Wünsch, Bahrdt, Paalzow, and Salvador. See also Hennell, *ubi supra*, ch. xvi., and, on the other hand, Reinhard's Plan of the Founder of Christianity, Andover, 1831.

probably remain, that he did not use courteous speech. We must judge a man by his highest moment. His denunciation of sleek, hollow Pharisees, is certainly lower than the prayer, "Father, forgive them!"—some say, not consistent with the highest thought of humanity. But if such would consider the youth of the man, it would seem a very venial error, to make the worst of it. The case called for vigorous treatment. Shall a man say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace? Sharp remedies are for inveterate and critical disease;—it is not with honied words, neither then nor now, that great sins are to be exposed. It is a pusillanimous and most mean-spirited wisdom that demands a religious man to prophesy smooth things, lest Indolence be rudely startled from his sleep, and the delicate nerves of Sin, grown hoary and voluptuous in his hypocrisy, be smartly twitched. It seems unmanly and absurd to say that a man filled with divine ideas should have no indignation at the world's wrong. Rather let it be said, No man's indignation should be like his, so deep, so uncompromising, but so holy and full of love. Let it be indignation—not personal spleen; call sin *sin*, sinners by their right name.

Yet in this general and righteous, though to some it might seem too vehement, indignation, against men when he speaks of them as a class and representatives of an idea, there is no lack of charity, none of love, when he speaks with an individual. He does not denounce timid Nicodemus, who came by night, for fear of the Jews; does not speak harshly to that young man who went away sorrowful, his great possessions on the one hand and the Kingdom of Heaven on the other; does not call Judas a traitor, and Simon Peter a false liar as he was; says only to James and John —ambitious youths—they know not what they ask; never addresses scornful talk to a Pharisee or long-robed doctor of the law, Herodians or Scribes, spite of their wide phylacteries, their love of uppermost seats, their devouring of widows' houses in private, their prayers and alms to be seen

of men. He only states the fact, but plainly and strongly, to their very face. Even for these men his soul is full of affection. He could honour an Herodian, pray for a Scribe, love even a Pharisee. It was not hatred, personal indignation, but love of man, which lit that burning zeal, and denounced such as sat in Moses' seat, boasting themselves children of Abraham, when they were children of the Devil, and did his works daily—dutiful children of the father of lies. How he wailed like a child for the mother that bore him—"Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!" How he prayed like a mother for her desperate son—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Are these the words of one that could hate even the wickedest of the deceitful? Who then can love his fellow-men? Arrogance, personal animosity, selfishness—of all these not the faintest shadow falls on him.

II. THE POSITIVE SIDE, OR THE EXCELLENCIES OF JESUS.

In estimating the character of Jesus it must be remembered that he died at an age when man has not reached his fullest vigour. The great works of creative intellect, the maturest products of man, all the deep and settled plans of reforming the world, come from a period when experience gives a wider field as the basis of hope. Socrates was but an embryo sage till long after the age of Jesus. Poems and Philosophies that live, come at a later date. Now here we see a young man, but little more than thirty years old, with no advantage of position; the son and companion of rude people; born in a town whose inhabitants were wicked to a proverb; of a nation above all others distinguished for their superstition, for national pride, exaltation of themselves and contempt for all others; in an age of singular corruption, when the substance of religion had faded out from the mind of its anointed ministers, and sin had spread wide among

a people turbulent, oppressed, and down-trodden;—a man ridiculed for his lack of knowledge, in this nation of forms, of hypocritical priests and corrupt people, falls back on simple Morality, simple Religion; unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages; rises free from all prejudice of his age, nation, or sect; gives free range to the spirit of God in his breast; sets aside the law, sacred and time-honoured as it was, its forms, its sacrifices, its temple, and its priests; puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, learned, irrefragable, and pours out a doctrine, beautiful as the light, sublime as Heaven, and true as God. The Philosophers, the Poets, the Prophets, the Rabbis,—he rises above them all. Yet Nazareth was no Athens, where Philosophy breathed in the circumambient air; it had neither Porch nor Lyceum, not even a school of the Prophets. There is God in the heart of this youth. Old teachers, past times, the dead letter of forms a century deceased, enslaved his fellow-men, the great, the wise: what were they to him? Let the dead bury their dead. Men had reverence for institutions so old, so deep-rooted, so venerably bearded with the moss of age. Should not he, at least, with that sweet conservatism of a pious heart, sacrifice a little to human weakness, and put his zeal, faith, piety, into the old religious form, sanctified by his early recollections, the tender prayer of his mother, and a long line of saints? New wine must be put into new bottles, says the young man, triumphing over a sentiment, natural and beautiful in its seeming; triumphant where strife is most perilous, victory rarest and most difficult. The Priest said, "Keep the Law, and reverence the Prophets." Jesus sums up the excellence of both —"Love Man and love God," leaving the chaff of Moses, and the husk of Ezekiel, with their "Thus-saith-the-Lord," to go to their own place, where the wind might carry them.

He looked around him, and saw the wicked, men who had served in the tenth legion of sin, pierced with the lances

and torn with the shot; men scarred and seamed all over with wounds got dishonourably in that service; men squalid with this hideous disease, their moral sense blinded, their nature perverse, themselves fallen from the estate of Godliness for which they were made, and unable, so they fancied, to lift themselves up; men who called good evil, and evil good;—he bade them rise up and walk, waiting no longer for a fancied Redeemer that would never come. He told them they also were men, children of God, and heirs of Heaven, would they but obey. So corrupt were they, there was no open vision for them;—the voice of God was a forgotten sound in their bosoms. To them he said, "I am the good Shepherd; follow me." At the sight of their penitence he says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Is not penitence itself the forgiveness of sins, the dawn of reconciliation with God? He showed men their sin, the disease of the soul living false to its law; told them their salvation; bade them obey and be blessed.

He saw the oppressor, with his yoke and heavy burthen for man's neck—the iron that enters the soul; men who were the corrupters, the bane, the ruin of the land; base men with an honourable front; low men, crawling, as worms, their loathsome track in high places; deceitful hucksters of salvation, making God's house of prayer a den of thieves, fair as marble without, but rottenness within. What wonder if Love, though the fairest of God's daughters, at sight of such baseness pours out the burning indignation of a man stung with the tyranny of the strong, ashamed at the patience of mankind; the word of a man fearless of all but to be false when Truth and Duty bid him speak? To call the Whelp of Sin a devil's child,—is that a crime? Doubtless it is, in men stirred by passion—not in a soul filled to the brim, and overflowing with love.

He looks on the nation, the children of pious Abraham;—the men for whom Moses made laws, and Samuel held the sceptre, and David prayed, and prophets admonished

in vain, pouring out their blood as water; men for whom psalmist and priest and seer and king had prayed and wept in vain;—well might he cry, "Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" Few heard his cries. That mightiest heart that ever beat, stirred by the Spirit of God, how it wrought in his bosom! What words of rebuke, of comfort, counsel, admonition, promise, hope, did he pour out—words that stir the soul as summer dews call up the faint and sickly grass! What profound instruction in his proverbs and discourses! what wisdom in his homely sayings, so rich with Jewish life! what deep divinity of soul in his prayers, his action, sympathy, resignation! Persecution comes—he bears it; contempt—it is nothing to him. Persecuted in one city, he flees into another. Scribes and Pharisees say, "He speaketh against Moses;" he replies, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They look back to the past, and say, "We have Abraham to our father;" he looks to the Comforter, and says, "Call no man your Father on Earth." They say, "He eats bread with unwashed hands, plucks corn and relieves disease on the holy Sabbath-day, when even God rested from his labours;" he says, "Worship the Father in spirit and in truth." They look out to their Law, its Festivals, its Levites, its Chief Priests, the Ancient and Honourable of the earth, the Temple and the Tithe; he looks in to the Soul, Purity, Peace, Mercy, Goodness, Love, Religion. The extremes meet often in this world;—Comedy and Tragedy jostle each other in every dirty lane. But here it was the Flesh and the Devil on one side, and the Holy Spirit on the other.

CHAPTER VII.

MISTAKES AROUT JESUS — HIS RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE.

We often err in our estimate of this man. The image comes to us,—not of that lowly one, the carpenter of Nazareth, the companion of the rudest men, hard-handed and poorly clad, not having where to lay his head; "who would gladly have stayed his morning appetite on wild figs, between Bethany and Jerusalem;" hunted by his enemies, stoned out of a city, and fleeing for his life. We take the fancy of poets and painters,—a man clothed in purple and fine linen, obsequiously attended by polished disciples, who watched every movement of his lips, impatient for the oracle to speak. We conceive of a man who was never in doubt, nor fear; whose course was all marked out before him, so that he could not err. But such it was not, if the writers tell truly. Did he say, "I came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets," and "it is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass, than for one jot or tittle of the Law to fail?" Then he must have doubted, and thought often, and with a throbbing heart, before he could say, "I am not come to bring peace, but a sword; to kindle a fire, and would God it were kindled!"—many times before the fulness of peace dwelt in him, and he could say, "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship in spirit and in truth." We do not conceive of that sickness of soul which must have come at the coldness of the wise men, the heart-

lessness of the worldly, at the stupidity and selfishness of the disciples. We do not think how that heart—so great, so finely tuned, and delicately touched—must have been pained to feel there was no other heart to give an answering beat. We know not the long and bitter agony that went before the triumph-cry of faith, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me;" we do not heed that faintness of soul which comes of hope deferred, of aspirations all unshared by men—a bitter mockery the only human reply, the oft-repeated echo to his prayer of faith. We find it difficult to keep unstained our decent robe of goodness when we herd only with the good, and shun the kennel where Sin and Misery,—parent and child,—are huddled with their rags; we do not appreciate that strong and healthy pureness of soul which dwelt daily with iniquity, sat at meat with publicans and sinners, and yet with such cleanness of life as made even sin ashamed of its ugliness, but hopeful to amend. Rarely, almost never, do we see the vast divinity within that soul, which, new though it was in the flesh, at one step goes before the world whole thousands of years; judges the race, decides for us questions we dare not agitate as yet, and breathes the very breath of heavenly love. The Christian world, aghast at such awful beauty in the flesh, transfixed with wonder as such a spirit rises in his heavenly flight, veils its face and says, "It is a God;—such thoughts are not for men; such life betrays the God." And is it not the Divine which the flesh enshrouds?—to speak in figures, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person; the clear resemblance of the all-beautiful; the likeness of God in which man is made? But alas for us! we read our lesson backward; make a God of our brother, who should be our model. So the new-fledged eaglets may see the parent bird, slow rising at first with laborious efforts, then cleaving the air with sharp and steady wing, and soaring through the clouds, with eye undazzled, to meet the sun; they may say, "We can only pray to the

strong pinion;" but anon their wings shall grow, and flutter impatient for congenial skies, and their parent's example guide them on. But men are still so sunk in sloth, so blind and deaf with sensuality and sin, they will not see the greatness of man in him who, falling back on the inspiration which God imparts, asks no aid of mortal men, but stands alone, serene in awful loveliness, not fearing the roar of the street, the hiss of the temple, the contempt of his townsmen, the coldness of this disciple, the treachery of that; who still bore up, had freest communion when all alone; was deserted, never forsaken; betrayed, but still safe; crucified, but all the more triumphant. This was the last victory of the soul—the highest type of man. Blessed be God that so much manliness has been lived out, and stands there yet, a lasting monument to mark how high the tides of divine life have risen in the world of man! It bids us take courage, and be glad, for what man has done, he may do.

Jesus! there is no dearer name than thine,
Which Time has blazoned on his mighty scroll;
No wreaths nor garlands ever did entwine
So fair a temple of so vast a soul.
There every Virtue set his triumph-seal;
Wisdom conjoined with Strength and radiant Grace,
In a sweet copy Heaven to reveal,
And stamp Perfection on a mortal face.
Once on the earth wert thou, before men's eyes,
That did not half thy beauteous brightness see;
E'en as the Emmet does not read the skies,
Nor our weak orbs look through immensity;—
Once on the earth wert thou, a living shrine,
Wherein conjoining dwelt the Good, the Lovely, the Divine.

The doctrine he taught was the Father's, not his: the personal will did not mingle its motes with the pure religious light of Truth; it fell through him as through void space, not coloured, not bent aside. Here was the greatest soul of all the sons of men; one before whom the majestic mind of Grecian sages and of Hebrew seers must veil its face. His perfect obedience made him free. So complete was it, that but a single will dwelt in him and God, and he could say,

"I and the Father are one." For this reason his teaching was absolute;—God's word was in him. Try him as we try other teachers. They deliver their word, find a few waiting for the consolation, who accept the new tidings, follow the new method, and soon go beyond their teacher, though less mighty minds than he. Such is the case with each founder of a school in Philosophy, each sect in Religion. Though humble men, we see what Socrates and Luther never saw. But eighteen centuries have past since the tide of humanity rose so high in Jesus: what man, what sect, what church, has mastered his thought, comprehended his method, and so fully applied it to life? Let the world answer in its cry of anguish. Men have parted his raiment among them, cast lots for his seamless coat; but that spirit which toiled so manfully in a world of sin and death, which did and suffered, and overcame the world,—is that found, possessed, understood? Nay, is it sought for and recommended by any of our churches?

But no excellence of aim, no sublimity of achievement, could screen him from distress and suffering. The fate of all Saviours was his—despised and rejected of men. His father's children "did not believe in him;" his townsmen "were offended at him," and said, "Whence hath he this wisdom? Is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter?" Those learned scribes who came all the way from Jerusalem to entangle him in his talk, could see only this—"He hath Beelzebub." "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" asked a conservative. Some said, "He is a good man." "Ay," said others, but "he speaketh against the temple." The sharp-eyed Pharisees saw nothing marvellous in the case. Why not? They were looking for signs and wonders in the heavens, not sermons on the mount, and a "Woe-unto-you, Scribes and Pharisees;" they looked for the Son of David; a king to rule over men's bodies,—not the son of a peasant-girl, born in a stable, the companion of

fishermen, the friend of publicans and sinners, who spoke to the outcast, brought in the lost sheep,—and so ruled in the soul, his kingdom not of this world. They said, "He is a Galilean, and of course no prophet." If he called men away from the senses to the soul, they said, "He is beside himself." "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" asks some one, who thought that settled the matter. When he said, If a man live by God's law, "he shall never see death," they exclaimed—those precious shepherds of the people—"Now we know thou hast a devil, and art mad. Abraham is dead, and the prophets: art thou greater than our father ABRAHAM? Who are you, sir?" What a faithful report would Scribes and Pharisees, and Doctors of the Law, have made of the Sermon on the Mount!—what omissions and redundancies would they not have found in it—what blasphemy against Moses and the Law, and the Ark of the Covenant, and the Urim and the Thummim, and the Meat-offering and the New-moons!—what neglect to mention the phylacteries, and the shew-bread and the Levite, and the priest and the tithes, and the other great essentials of Religion!—what "infidelity" must these pious souls have detected! How must they have classed him with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the mythological "Tom-Paines" of old time—with the men of Sodom and Gomorrah! The popular praise of the young Nazarene, with his divine life and lip of fire; the popular shout, "Hosannah to the Son of David!" was no doubt "a stench in the nostrils of the righteous." "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Find *Faith?* He comes to bring it. It is only by crucified redeemers that the world is saved. Prophets are doomed to be stoned—Apostles to be sawn asunder. The world knoweth its own, and loveth them. Even so let it be;—the stoned prophet is not without his reward. The balance of God is even.

Yet there were men who heard the new word. Truth

never yet fell dead in the streets; it has such affinity with the soul of man, that the seed, however broad-cast, will catch somewhere, and produce its hundred-fold. Some kept his sayings, and pondered them in their heart;—others heard them gladly. Did priests and Levites stop their ears? Publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. Those blessed women, whose hearts God has sown deepest with the orient pearl of faith—they who ministered to him in his wants, washed his feet with tears of penitence, and wiped them with the hairs of their head,—was it in vain he spoke to them? Alas for the anointed priest, the child of Levi, the son of Aaron, men who shut up inspiration in old books, and believed God was asleep! They stumbled in darkness, and fell into the ditch. But doubtless there was many a tear-stained face that brightened like fires new stirred, as Truth spoke out of Jesus' lips. His word swayed the multitude as pendant vines swing in the summer wind; as the spirit of God moved on the waters of chaos, and said "Let there be light," and there was light. No doubt many a rude fisherman of Gennesareth heard his words with a heart bounding and scarce able to keep in his bosom—went home a new man, with a legion of angels in his breast, and from that day lived a life divine and beautiful. No doubt, on the other hand, Rabbi Kozeb Ben Shatan, when he heard of this eloquent Nazarene and his Sermon on the Mount, said to his disciples in private at Jerusalem—"This new doctrine will not injure us, prudent and educated men; we know that men may worship as well out of the Temple as in it; a burnt-offering is nothing—the ritual of no value—the Sabbath like any other day—the Law faulty in many things, offensive in some, and no more from God than other laws equally good. We know that the priesthood is a human affair, originated and managed like other human affairs .We may confess all this to ourselves, but what is the use of telling of it? The people wish to be deceived; let them. The Pharisee will conduct

wisely like a Pharisee—for he sees the eternal fitness of things—even if these doctrines should be proclaimed. But this people, who know not the law, what will become of them? Simon Peter, James and John,—those poor unlettered fishermen on the lake of Galilee, to whom we gave a farthing and the priestly blessing in our summer excursion,—what will become of them when told that every word of the Law did not come straight out of the mouth of Jehovah, and the ritual is nothing! They will go over to the Flesh and the Devil, and be lost. It is true, that the Law and the Prophets are well summed up in one word, Love God and man;—but never let *us* sanction the saying; it would ruin the seed of Abraham, keep back the kingdom of God, and 'destroy our usefulness.'" Thus went it at Jerusalem. The new word was "Blasphemy," the new prophet an "Infidel," "beside himself, had a devil." But at Galilee, things took a shape somewhat different—one which blind guides could not foresee. The common people, not knowing the Law, counted him a prophet come up from the dead, and heard him gladly. Yes, thousands of men, and women also, with hearts in their bosoms, gathered in the field and pressed about him in the city and the desert place, forgetful of hunger and thirst, and were fed to the full with his words, so deep that a child could understand them: James and John leave all to follow him who had the word of eternal life; and when that young carpenter asks Peter, "Whom sayest thou that I am?" it has been revealed to that poor unlettered fisherman, not by flesh and blood, but by the word of the Lord, and he can say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Pharisee went his way, and preached a doctrine that he knew was false; the fisherman also went his way,—but which to the Flesh and the Devil?*

We cannot tell—no man can tell—the feelings which

* For some similar thoughts on this subject, see Miscellaneous Writings, Art. XI.

the large free doctrines of Absolute Religion awakened when heard for the first time. There must have been many a Simeon waiting for the consolation; many a Mary longing for the better part; many a soul in cabins and cottages and stately dwellings, that caught glimpses of the same truth, as God's light shone through some crevice which Piety made in that wall Prejudice and Superstition had built up betwixt man and God; men who scarce dared to trust that revelation—"too good to be true,"—such was their awe of Moses, their reverence for the priest. To them the word of Jesus must have sounded divine; like the music of their home sung out in the sky, and heard in a distant land, beguiling toil of its weariness, pain of its sting, affliction of despair. There must have been men, sick of forms which had lost their meaning; pained with the open secret of sacerdotal hypocrisy; hungering and thirsting after the truth,—yet whom Error and Prejudice and Priestcraft had blinded so that they dared not think as men, nor look on the sun-light God shed upon the mind.

But see what a work it has wrought! Men could not hold the word in their bosoms; it would not be still. No doubt they sought—those rude disciples—after their teacher's death, to quiet the matter and say nothing about it; they had nerves that quivered at the touch of steel; wives and children whom it was hard to leave behind, to the world's uncertain sympathy; respectable friends, it may be, who said "The old Law did very well; let well enough alone. The people must be deceived a little; the world can never be much mended." No doubt Truth stood on one side, and Ease on the other: it has often been so. Perhaps the disciples went to the old synagogue more sedulous than before; paid tithes, kept the new-moons, were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice; made low bows to the Levite, sought his savoury conversation, and kept the rules which a priest gave George Fox. But it would not do;—there was too much truth to be hid. Even selfish Simon

Peter has a cloven tongue of fire in his mouth, and he and the disciples go to their work, the new word swelling in their labouring heart.

Then came the strangest contest the world ever saw. On the one side is all the strength of the world,—the JEWS with their Records from the hand of Moses, David, and Esaias; supernatural records, that go back to the birth of time; their Law derived from Jehovah, attested by miracles, upheld by prophets, defended by priests, children of Levi, sons of Aaron—the Law which was to last forever; the Temple, forty and seven years in being built, its splendid ceremonies, its beautiful gate and golden porch; there was the wealth of the powerful; the pride, the self-interest, the prejudice of the priestly class; the indifference of the worldly, the hatred of the wicked, the scorn of the learned, the contempt of the great. On the same side were the GREEKS, with their Chaos of Religion, full of mingled beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice, piety and lust, still more confounded by the deep mysteries of the priests, the cunning speculations of the sophist, the awful sublimity of the sage, by the sweet music of the philosopher, and moralist and poet, who spoke and sung of man and God in strains so sweet and touching; there were rites in public—solemn and pompous ceremonies, processions, festivals, temples, games, to captivate that wondrous people; there were secret mysteries, to charm the curious and attract the thoughtful;—Greece, with her Arts, her Science, her Heroes and her Gods, her Muse voluptuous and sweet. There too was ROME, the Queen of nations, and Conqueror of the world, who sat on her seven-hilled throne, and cast her net eastward and southward and northward and westward, over tower and city and realm and empire, and drew them to herself, a giant's spoil; with a Religion haughty and insolent, that looked down on the divinities of Greece and Egypt, of "Ormus and of Ind," and gave them a shelter in her capacious robe; Rome, with her practised skill; Rome,

with her eloquence; Rome, with her pride; Rome, with her arms, hot from the conquest of a thousand kings. On the same side are all the institutions of all the world; its fables, wealth, armies, pride, its folly and its sin. On the other hand are a few Jewish fishermen, untaught, rude and vulgar; not free from gross errors; despised at home, and not known abroad; collected together in the name of a young carpenter, who died on the gallows, and whom they declared to be risen from the dead; men with no ritual, no learning, no books, no brass in their purse, no philosophy in their mind, no eloquence on their tongue. A Roman Sceptic might tell how soon these fanatics would fall out and destroy themselves, after serving as a terror to the maids and sport to the boys of a Jewish hamlet, and so that "detestable superstition" come to an end! A priest of Jerusalem, with his oracular gossip, could tell how long the Sanhedrim would suffer them to go at large, in the name of "that deceiver," whose body "they stole away by night"! Alas for what man calls great—the pride of prejudice, the boast of power! These fishermen of Galilee have a truth the world has not, so they are stronger than the world. Ten weak men may chain down a giant; but no combination of errors can make a truth or put it down; no army of the ignorant equal one man that has the Word of Life. Besides, all the truth in Judea, Greece, Rome, was an auxiliary to favour the new doctrine.

The first preachers of Christianity had false notions on many points: they were full of Jewish fables and technicalities; thought the world would soon end, and Jesus come back "with power and great glory." Peter would now and then lie to serve his turn; Paul was passionate, often one-sided; Barnabas and Mark could not agree. There was something of furious enthusiasm in all these come-outers;—James roars like a fanatic or radical at the rich man, not without cause. But spite of the follies or limitations of these earnest and manly Jews, a religious fire burned in

their hearts; the Word of God grew and prevailed. The new doctrine passes from its low beginnings on the Galilean lake, step by step, through Jerusalem, Ephesus, Antioch, Alexandria, Corinth, Rome, till it ascends the throne of the world, and kings and empires lie prostrate at its feet.* But, alas! as it spreads it is corrupted also. Judaism, Paganism, Idolatry, mingle their feculent scum with the living stream, and trouble the water of Life.

Christianity came to the world in the darkness of the nations;—they had outgrown their old form, and looked for a new; they stood in the shadow of darkness, fearing to look back, not daring to look forward; they groped after God. Christianity came to the Nations as a beam of light shot into chaos; a strain of sweet music—so silvery and soft we know not we are listening—to him who wanders on amid the uncertain gloom, and charms him to the Light, to the River of God, and the Tree of Life. It was the fulfilment of the prophecy of holy hearts. It is human Religion, human Morality, and above all things reveals the greatness of man.

It is sometimes feared that Christianity is in danger; that its days are numbered. Of the Christianity of the Churches, no doubt it is true;—that child of many fathers cannot die too soon;—it cumbers the ground. But the Christianity of Christ, absolute Religion, absolute Morality, cannot perish; never till Love, Goodness, Devotion, Faith, Reason, fail from the heart of man; never till God melts away and vanishes, and nothing takes the place of the All-in-All. Religion can no more be separated from the race, than thought and feeling, nor absolute Religion die out, more than wisdom perish from among men. Man's words, thoughts, churches, fail and pass off like clouds from the sky that leave no track behind. But God's Word can

* See Miscellaneous Writings, Articles I. and XI.

never change. It shines perennial like the stars; its testimony is in man's heart. None can outgrow it; none destroy. For eighteen hundred years, the Christianity of Christ has been in the world, to warn and to encourage. Violence and Cunning, allies of Sin, have opposed it; every weapon Learning could snatch from the arsenals of the past, or Science devise anew, or Pride and Cruelty and Wit invent, has been used by mistaken man to destroy this fabric: not a stone has fallen from the heavenly arch of real Religion; not a loop-hole been found where a shot could enter. But alas! vain doctrines, follies, absurdities without count, have been piled against the temple of God, marring its beauteous shape. That Christianity continues to live, spite of the traditions, fables, doctrines wrapped about it, is proof enough of its truth. Reason never warred against love of God and man, never with the Christianity of Christ, but always with that of the Churches. There is much destructive work still to be done, which scoffers will attempt.

Can man destroy Absolute Religion? He cannot, with all the arts and armies of the world, destroy the pigment that colours an emmet's eye. He may obscure the Truth to his own mind; but it shines for ever unchanged. So boys of a summer's day throw dust above their heads, to blind the sun: they only hide it from their blinded eyes.

BOOK IV.

"No man would be so ridiculous as (since Columbus discovered the new world of America, as big as the old, since the enlarged knowledge of the North of Europe, the South and East of Asia and Africa, besides the new divisions, names, and inhabitants of the old parts) to forbid the reading of any more Geography than is found in Strabo, or Mela; or, since the Portuguese have sailed to the Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, to admit of no other Indian commodities than what are brought on camels to Aleppo; or if posterity shall find out the North-east or North-west way to Cathajo and China, or shall cut the Isthmus between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, will it be unlawful to use the advantage of such noble achievements? If any man love *acorns* since *corn* is invented, let him eat *acorns;* but it is very unreasonable he should forbid others the use of *wheat.* Whatever is *solid* in the writings of Aristotle, these new philosophers will readily embrace; and they that are most accused for affecting the *new*, doubt not but they can give as good an account of the *old philosophy* as their most violent accusers, and are probably as much conversant in Aristotle's writings, though they do not much value these small wares that are usually retailed by the generality of his interpreters."—*A Brief Account of the new Sect of Latitudemen*, by G. B. Oxford, 1662, p. 13–14.

BOOK IV.

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT TO THE GREATEST OF BOOKS, OR A DISCOURSE OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

POSITION OF THE BIBLE — CLAIMS MADE FOR IT — STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

VIEW it in what light we may, the Bible is a very surprising phenomenon. In all Christian lands, this collection of books is separated from every other, and called sacred; others are profane. Science may differ from them, not from this. It is deemed a condescension on the part of its friends, to show its agreement with Reason. How much has been written by condescending theologians to show that the Bible was not inconsistent with the demonstrations of Newton! Should a man attempt to reëstablish the cosmogonies of Hesiod and Sanchoniathon, to allegorize the poems of Anacreon and Theocritus as divines mystify the Scripture, it would be said he wasted his oil, and truly.

This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this book from a nation alike despised in ancient and modern times. It is read of a Sabbath in all the ten thousand pulpits of our land. In all the

temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up, week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar, and colours the talk of the street. The bark of the merchant cannot sail the sea without it; no ship of war go to the conflict but the Bible is there. It enters men's closets; mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays God in Scripture for strength in her new duties; men are married by Scripture. The Bible attends them in their sickness; when the fever of the world is on them. The aching head finds a softer pillow when the Bible lies underneath. The mariner escaping from shipwreck, clutches this first of his treasures, and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the pedlar, in his crowded pack; cheers him at even-tide, when he sits down dusty and fatigued; brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born; gives names to half Christendom; rejoices with us; has sympathy for our mourning; tempers our grief to finer issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about awaking from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture, and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death-angel by the hand, and bid farewell to wife and babes and home. Men rest on this their dearest hopes. It tells them of God, and of his blessed Son—of earthly duties, and of heavenly rest. Foolish men find it the source of Plato's wisdom, and the science of Newton, and the art of Raphael. Men who believe nothing else that is spiritual, believe the Bible all through; without this they would not confess, say they, even that there was a God.

Now for such effects there must be an adequate cause. That nothing comes of nothing, is true all the world over.

It is no light thing to hold, with an electric chain, a thousand hearts, though but an hour, beating and bounding with such fiery speed: what is it then to hold the Christian world, and that for centuries? Are men fed with chaff and husks? The authors we reckon great, whose word is in the newspapers and the market-place, whose articulate breath now sways the nation's mind, will soon pass away, giving place to other great men of a season, who in their turn shall follow them to eminence, and then oblivion. Some thousand famous writers come up in this century, to be forgotten in the next. But the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed, nor its golden bowl broken, as Time chronicles his tens of centuries passed by. Has the human race gone mad? Time sits as a refiner of metal; the dross is piled in forgotten heaps, but the pure gold is reserved for use, passes into the ages, and is current a thousand years hence as well as to-day. It is only real merit that can long pass for such; tinsel will rust in the storms of life; false weights are soon detected there. It is only a heart that can speak, deep and true, to a heart; a mind to a mind, a soul to a soul; wisdom to the wise, and religion to the pious. There must then be in the Bible, mind, heart, and soul, wisdom and religion: were it otherwise, how could millions find it their lawgiver, friend, and prophet? Some of the greatest of human institutions seem built on the Bible; such things will not stand on heaps of chaff but on mountains of rock.

What is the secret cause of this wide and deep influence? It must be found in the Bible itself, and must be adequate to the effect. To answer the question, we must examine the Bible, and see whence it comes, what it contains, and by what authority it holds its place. If we look superficially, it is a collection of books in human language, from different authors and times; we refer it to a place amongst other books, and proceed to examine it as the works of Homer or Xenophon. But the popular opinion bids us beware, for

we tread on holy ground. The opinion commonly expressed by the Protestant churches is this: The Bible is a miraculous collection of miraculous books; every word it contains was written by a miraculous inspiration from God, which was so full, complete, and infallible, that the authors delivered the truth and nothing but the truth; that the Bible contains no false statement of doctrine or fact, but sets forth all religious and moral truth which man needs, or which it is possible for him to attain, and no particle of error; therefore, that *the Bible is the only authoritative rule of religious faith and practice.** To doubt this is reckoned a dangerous error, if not an unpardonable sin. This is the supernatural view. Some scholars slyly reject the divine authority of the Old Testament; others reject it openly, but cling strongly as ever to the New; some make a distinction between the genuine and the spurious books of the New Testament: thus there is a difference in the less or more of an inspired and miraculous canon. The modern Unitarians have perhaps reduced the Scripture to its lowest terms. But Protestants in general, in America, agree that in the whole or in part the Bible is an infallible and exclusive standard of religious and moral truth: *the Bible is master to the soul;* superior to Reason, truer than Conscience, greater and more trustworthy than the religious Sentiment. Accordingly, with strict logical consistency, a peculiar method is used both in the criticism and interpretation of the Bible, such as men apply to no other ancient documents. A deference is paid to it wholly independent of its intrinsic merit. It is pre-

* It is scarce necessary to cite authorities to prove this statement, as it is a notorious fact. But see the most obvious sources,—Westminster Catechism, Quest. 2; Calvin's Institutes, Book I. ch. vi.–ix.; Knapp, *ubi sup.*, § 1–13, especially Vol. I. p. 130, *et seq.* See also Gaussen's Theopneusty, or the Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, translated by E. N. Kirk, New York, 1842. The latter maintains that "all the written Word is inspired of God, even to a single iota or tittle," p. 333, and *passim.* See Musculus, Loci Communes, ed. 1564, p. 178. But see also Socinus, De Auctoritate Sac. Scrip., in Bibliotheca Fratrr., Polon. Vol. I.; Limborch, Theol. ch. i.; Episcopius Instit. P. IV.

supposed that each book within the lids of the Bible has an absolute right to be there, and that each sentence or word therein is infallibly true.* Reason has nothing to do in the premises but accept the written statement of "the Word;" the duty of belief is just the same whether the Word contradict Reason and Conscience, or agrees with them.†

Now this opinion about the Bible is true or not true. If true, it is capable of proof, at least of being shown to be probable. Now there are but four possible ways of establishing the fact, namely,—

1. *By the authority of the Church,* which has either a miraculous inspiration or a miraculous tradition to prove the alleged infallibility of the Bible. But the Church is not agreed on this point. The Roman Church very stoutly denies the fact; and besides, the Protestants deny the authority of the Roman Church.

2. *By the direct testimony of God in the heart,* assuring us of the miraculous infallibility of the Bible. Here is one miracle to prove another, which is not logical. The proof is only *subjective,* and is as valuable to prove the divinity of the Koran, the Shaster, and the Book of Mormon, as that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. It is the argument of the superstitious and enthusiastical.

3. *By the fact that the Bible claims this divine infallibility.* This is reasoning in a circle, though it is the method commonly relied on by Christians. It will prove as well the divinity of any impostor who claims it.‡

* The writings of the Unitarians are exceptions to this general rule. They attempt to separate the spurious from the genuine. See the Christian Examiner, *passim;* Norton, Statement of Reasons, &c., p. 136, *et seq.;* Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels, Vol. I. p. liii. *et seq.;* see especially p. lxi. Dr. Palfrey, *ubi sup.,* denies the miraculous inspiration of the Old Testament, except the last four books of Moses, and there diminishes its intensity.

† See Gaussen, *ubi sup.;* Horne, Introduction to the Holy Scriptures, Philad. 1840, Vol. I. p. 1–187.

‡ See this claim made in the Koran, Sale's translation, London, new edition, p. 162, *et seq.,* 206, 372, 400, 152, &c., 219, 127, *et al.*

4. *By an examination of the contents of the Bible, and the external history of its origin.* To proceed in this way, we must ask, "*Are all its statements infallibly true?* But to ask this question presupposes the standard-measure to be in ourselves, not in the Bible; so, at the utmost, the Book can be no more infallible, and have no more authority, than Reason and the moral Sense by which we try it;—a single mistake condemns its infallibility, and of course its divinity. But the case is still worse. After the truth of a book is made out, before a work in human language like other books can be referred to God as its author, one of two things must be shown: either, *That its contents could not have come from man,* and then it follows by implication that they came from God; or, *That at a certain time and place, God did miraculously reveal the contents of the book.* Now it is a notorious fact, first, that it has not been, and cannot be proved, that every statement in the Bible is true; or, secondly, that its contents, such as they are, could not have proceeded from man, under the ordinary influence of God; or, finally, that any one book or word of the Bible was miraculously revealed to man. In the absence of proof for any one of these three points, it has been found a more convenient way to assume the truth of them all, and avoid troublesome questions.

Laying aside all prejudices, if we look into the Bible in a general way, as into other books, we find facts which force the conclusion upon us that the Bible is a human work, as much as the Principia of Newton or Descartes. Some things are beautiful and true; but others, no man in his reason can accept. Here are the works of various writers, from the eleventh century before, to the second century after Christ, it may be, thrown capriciously together, and united by no common tie but the lids of the bookbinder. Here are two forms of religion which differ widely, set forth and enforced by miracles; the one ritual and formal—the other actual and spiritual; the one the Religion of Fear

—the other of Love; one finite, and resting entirely on the special revelation made to Moses—the other absolute, and based on the universal revelation of God, who enlightens all that come into the world; one offers only an earthly recompense—the other makes immortality a motive to a divine life; one compels men—the other invites them. One half the Bible repeals the other half: the Gospel annihilates the Law; the Apostles take the place of the Prophets, and go higher up. If Christianity and Judaism be not the same thing, there must be hostility between the Old Testament and the New Testament, for the Jewish form claims to be eternal. To an unprejudiced man, this hostility is very obvious. It may indeed be said, Christianity came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them; and the answer is plain, their fulfilment was their destruction.

If we look at the Bible as a whole, we find numerous contradictions: conflicting histories which no skill can reconcile with themselves or with facts; Poems which the Christians have agreed to take as histories, but which lead only to confusion on that hypothesis; prophecies that have never been fulfilled, and from the nature of things never can be. We find stories of miracles which could not have happened; accounts which represent the laws of nature completely transformed, as in fairy-land, to trust the tales of the old romancers; stories that make God a man of war, cruel, capricious, revengful, hateful, and not to be trusted. We find amatory songs, selfish proverbs, sceptical discourses, and the most awful imprecations human fancy ever clothed in speech. Connected with these are lofty thoughts of nature, man, and God; devotion touching and beautiful, and a most reverent faith. Here are works whose authors are known; others, of which the author, age, and country, are alike forgotten. Genuine and spurious works, religious and not religious, are strangely mixed. But the subject demands a more minute and detailed examination in each of its main parts.

CHAPTER II.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLAIMS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO BE A DIVINE, MIRACULOUS, OR INFALLIBLE COMPOSITION.

It is not possible to prove *directly* the divine and miraculous character of the Old Testament by showing that God miraculously revealed it to the writers thereof, for *we do not know who were the writers of the greater part of the books;* and when the authors are known, it is only by their own testimony, which we have no right to assume to be infallible. We have not the faintest *direct* evidence to show there was anything miraculous in their composition. The *indirect* evidence may be reduced to two branches,—that which shows that *all the statements of the Old Testament are true;* or that which shows that *it contains statements of things above human apprehension.* From the nature of the case, the former proposition cannot be proved, since many things treated of in the Bible are known to us by that book alone: to say they are true, is to assume the fact at issue. Besides, a true statement is not necessarily miraculous; if it were, the multiplication table of Pythagoras would be a divine and miraculous composition. The latter proposition has also its difficulty. How do we know that its statements are *above human apprehension?* But suppose they are, how do we know they are *true?* These difficulties are insuperable. To *assume* the divinity of the Old Testament is quite as absurd as to assume the same for the next book

that shall be printed; to declare it miraculous on account of the beautiful piety in some parts of it, is as foolish as to make the same claim for the Geometry of Euclid and the Poems of Homer, on account of their great excellence;—to admit this claim because made by some of the Jews, is no more wise than to admit the claims of the Zoroastrian records and the Sibylline oracles, and the religious books of all nations; then, among so many, one is of no value, for the very excellence of a miraculous work is thought to consist in the fact of its being the *only* miraculous work.

To leave these assumptions and come to facts, this general thesis may be laid down, and maintained: *Every book of the Old Testament bears distinct marks of its human origin; some of human folly and sin; all of human weakness and imperfection.* If this thesis be true, the Bible is not the direct work of God—not the master of Common Sense, Reason, Conscience, and the religious Sentiment. To prove this proposition, it is necessary to go into some details. The Hebrews divided their scriptures into the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, to each of which they assigned a peculiar degree of inspiration. The Law was infallibly inspired, God speaking with Moses face to face; the Prophets less perfectly, God addressing them by visions and dreams; the Writings still more feebly, God communicating to their authors by figures and enigmas.* This ancient division may well enough be followed in this discussion.

I. OF THE LAW.

This comprises the first five books of the Bible. They are commonly ascribed to Moses; but there is no proof that he wrote a word of them;—only the Decalogue, in a

* See Philo, De Monarch. I. p. 820; De Vita Mosis, III. p. 681; II. p. 656, *et seq.*; Josephus cont. Apion, I. 8.

compendious form, and perhaps a few fragments, can be referred to him with much probability. From the use of peculiar words, from local allusions, and other incidental signs, it is plain here are fragments from several different writers, who lived no one knows when or where, their names perfectly unknown to us. They all bear marks of an age much later than that of Moses, as any one familiar with ancient history, and free from prejudice, may see on examination.*

But if they were written by Moses, we are not, on the bare word of a writer, to admit the miraculous infallibility of his statements. Besides, the character of the books is such, that a very high place is not to be assigned them among human compositions, measured by the standard of the present day. The first chapter of Genesis, if taken as a history, in the unavoidable sense of its terms, is at variance with facts. It relates that God created the sun, moon, stars, and earth, and gave the latter its plants, animals, and men, in six days; while science proves that many thousands, if not millions, of years must have passed between the creation of the first plants, and man, the crown of creation; that the surface of the earth gradually received its present form; one race of plants after the other sprang up; animals succeeded animals, the simpler first, then the more complex; and at last came man. This chapter tells of an ocean of water above our heads, separated from us by a solid expanse, in which the greater and lesser lights are fixed; that there was evening and morning, before there was a sun to cause the difference between day and night; that the sun and stars were created after the earth, for the earth's convenience; and that God ceased his action, and rested on the seventh day. Here the Bible is at variance with science, which is nature stated in exact language. Few men will

* The proofs of this assertion cannot be adduced in a brief discourse like the present; they may be found in the work announced in the Preface.

say directly what the schoolmen said to Galileo, "If Nature is opposed to the Bible, then Nature is mistaken, for the Bible is certainly right;" but the popular view of the Bible logically makes that assertion. Truth and the book of Genesis cannot be reconciled, except on the hypothesis that the Bible means anything it can be made to mean,*—but then it means nothing.

A similar decision must be pronounced upon many other accounts in the Law,—on the creation of woman; the story of the garden, the temptation and fall of man; the appearances of God in human shape, eating and drinking with his favourite, and making covenants; the story of the flood and the ark; the miraculous birth of Isaac; the promise to the patriarchs; the great age of mankind; the tower of Babel, and the confusion of tongues; the sacrifice of Isaac; the history of Joseph; of Moses; the ten plagues, miraculously sent; the wonderful passage of the Red Sea; the support of the Hebrews in the wilderness on manna; the miraculous supply of food, water, and clothing; and the delivery of the Law at Mount Sinai.† On these it is needless to dwell. But there is one account in the Law, too significant to be passed over.‡ It is briefly this. As the Jews approached the land of Canaan, Moses sent twelve men, "heads of the children of Israel," to examine the land and report to the people. They spent a long time in their tour, reported that the land was fertile, exhibited specimens of its productions, but added, it was full of warlike nations. The Jews were afraid to invade it—"They wept all night, and said, Would God we had died in the land of Egypt." They rebelled, and wished to choose a leader and return. Moses and Aaron, and Caleb and Joshua—two of the

* See Augustine, Confess. Lib. XII. ch. 18, *et al.*

† See many valuable remarks in Palfrey, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 1–133. His is, perhaps, the only book in the English tongue which attempts to look the Old Testament in the face.

‡ Numbers xiv.

twelve messengers—urged them to battle, and say, "Jehovah is with us." The people refuse, and would stone them. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared before the face of the people, and God says to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." But Moses, more merciful than his God, attempts to appease the Deity, and that by an appeal to his vanity—"And Moses said unto Jehovah, Then the Egyptians shall hear of it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations will speak, saying, Because Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them." Then he proceeds to soothe his Deity—"Pardon the iniquity of this people." "Jehovah is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty." Jehovah consents, but adds, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah;" but "because all these men have tempted me now these ten times, ... surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, ... your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, ... in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

If an unprejudiced Christian were to read this for the first time in a heathen writer, and it was related of Kronos or Moloch, he would say—"What foul ideas these heathens had of God!—thank Heaven we are Christians, and cannot believe in a deity so terrible!" It is true, there are now pious men who believe the story to the letter, profess to find comfort therein, and count it part of their Christianity to believe it. But is God angry with men? passionate, revengeful—offended because they will not war and butcher the innocent? Would He violate his perfect law, and by a miracle destroy a whole nation, millions of men, women,

and children, because they fall into a natural fit of despair, and refuse to trust ten witnesses rather than two witnesses? Does God require man's words to restrain His rage, violence, and a degree of fury which Nero and Caracalla—butchers of men though they were—would have shuddered to think of? Is He to be teazed and coaxed from murder? Are we called on to believe this in the name of Christianity? Then perish Christianity from the face of the earth, and let man learn of his Religion and his God from the stars and the violet, the lion and the lamb! View this as the savage story of some oriental who attributed a bloodthirsty character to his God, and made a Deity in his own image, and it is a striking remnant of barbarism that has passed away, not destitute of dramatic interest—not without its melancholy moral. There are some things which may be true, but must be rejected for lack of evidence to prove them true; but this story no amount of evidence could make possible.

Throughout the whole of the Law, fact and fiction, history and mythology, are so intimately blended, that it seems impossible to tell where the one begins and the other ends. The laws are not perfect; they contain a mingling of good and bad, wise and absurd; and if men will maintain that God is their author, we must still apply to them the words which Ezekiel puts in his mouth—"I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;" or say with Jeremiah—"I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings, or sacrifices." *

II. OF THE PROPHETS.

The Hebrews divide the Prophets into the earlier and the later: the first including the four historical works of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the Kings; the second the

* Ezekiel, ch. xx. 25; Jer. vii. 22.

Prophets properly so called, with the exception of Daniel, the three major, the twelve minor prophets.

1. *Of the Early Prophets.*

No one knows the date or the author of any one of these books. They all contain historical matter of doubtful character, such as the miraculous passage of the Jordan, the destruction of Jericho, the standing still of the sun and moon at the command of Joshua, the story of Samson, the destruction of the Benjamites, the birth and calling of Samuel, the wonders wrought by the Ark, the story of Saul, David, and Goliah, the miraculous pestilence, of Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, and others. Of all these, perhaps the story of Samson is the most strikingly absurd—a man of miraculous birth and miraculous strength, whose ability lay in his long hair, and which went from him when his locks were shorn off. When we read, in Hesiod and elsewhere, the birth and exploits of Hercules—who bears a resemblance to Samson in some respects, though vastly his superior on the whole—we refer the tale to human fancy in a low state of civilization: a mind free from prejudice will do the same with the story of Samson.* No one can reasonably contend that it requires a mind miraculously enlightened to produce such books as these of the early prophets. They belong to the fabulous period of Jewish history;—mythology, poetry, fact and fiction, are strangely woven together. The authors, whoever they were, claim no inspiration. However, as a general rule, they contain less to offend a religious mind than the books of the Law.

2. *The Prophets, properly so called.*

It may be said of these writings in general, that they contain nothing above the reach of human faculties. Here are noble and spirit-stirring appeals to men's conscience,

* See Palfrey, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 194, *et seq.*; and on these books in general, p. 134–300; Horne, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 216, *et seq.*

patriotism, honour, and religion; beautiful poetic descriptions, odes, hymns, expressions of faith, almost beyond praise. But the mark of human infirmity is on them all, and proofs or signs of miraculous inspiration are not found in them. In the minor prophets, there is nothing worthy of special notice in this place, unless it be the story of Jonah, which is unique in the ancient Hebrew literature, and tells its own tale. These books do not require a detailed examination.* The greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, are more important, and require a more minute notice. In these, as well as in other prophetical books, and the Law, claim is apparently made to miraculous inspiration. "Thus saith Jehovah," is the authority to which the prophet appeals,—"Jehovah said unto me,"—"The command of Jehovah came unto me,"—"I saw in a vision,"—"The spirit of Jehovah came upon me;"—these and similar expressions occur often in the prophets. But do these phrases denote a claim to miraculous inspiration as we understand it? We limit miraculous inspiration to a few cases, where something is to be done above human ability. Not so the Hebrews; they did not make a sharp distinction between the miraculous and the common. All religious and moral power was regarded as the direct gift of God—an outpouring of his spirit. God teaches David to fight; commands Gideon to select his soldiers, to arise in the night and attack the foe. The Lord set his enemies to fight amongst themselves. He teaches Bezaleel and Aholiab; they, and all the ingenious mechanics, are filled with "the spirit of God." The same "spirit of the Lord" enables Samson to kill a lion and many men. These instances show with what latitude the phrase is used, and how loose were the notions of inspiration.† The Greeks also referred their

* See De Wette's Introduction to the Old Testament, translated, &c. by Theodore Parker, Boston 1843, 2 vols.

† See Glassius, Philologia Sacra, ed. Dathe, Vol. II. p. 815, *et seq.*; Bauer, Theologie des A., I. § 51-54, *et al.*

works to the aid of Phœbus, Pallas, Minerva, Vulcan, or Olympian Jove, in the same way. It has never been rendered probable that the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord," and its kindred terms, were understood by the prophets or their hearers to denote any *miraculous* agency in the case. They employ language with the greatest freedom. Thus a writer says, "I saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; above it stood the seraphim." No thinking man would suppose the prophet designed to assert a fact, or that his countrymen understood him to do so. Certainly it is insulting to suppose that a Christian would believe that God sat on a throne, with a troop of courtiers around him, like a Persian king. When a prophet says Jehovah appeared to him in a dream, he can only mean, either he dreamed Jehovah appeared, which is somewhat different, or that he chose this symbolical way of stating his opinion. Thus a Grecian prophet might say, "The Muse came down from high Olympus' shaggy top, and whispered unto me, her favourite son."* Not stating a fact, he would give an outness to what passed in his mind. However, if these writers claimed miraculous inspiration ever so strongly, we are not to grant it unless they abide the test mentioned above.

If they utter predictions—which they rarely attempt—we are not to assume their fulfilment, and then conclude the prophet was miraculously inspired, common as the method is. But what is the value of the claim made for them? Has any one of them ever uttered a distinct, definite, and unambiguous prediction of any future event that has since taken place, which a man without a miracle could not equally well predict? It has never been shown. Most of the prophetic writings relate to the past and the present; to the political, civil, and moral condition of the people at

* See Cicero, De Nat. Deorum, Lib. I. ch. i. and ii.; Ovid, Metamorph. Lib. II. 640, *et seq.*

the time; they exhort backsliding Israel to forsake his idols, return to Jehovah, live wisely and well. They state the result of obedience or of disobeying, for individuals and the nation. It is rare they predict distinctly and definitely any specific event; sometimes they declare, in the most general terms, good or ill fortune, the destruction of a city, the defeat of an army, the downfall of a king; but in case the prediction came to pass, who shall tell us, at this distance of time, that it was not either a lucky hit, or the result of sagacious insight? Certainly the supposition is against a miracle. The Tripod of Delphi delivered some oracles that were extraordinarily felicitous; Seneca made a very clear prediction of the discovery of America, and Lactantius of the rise and downfall of Napoleon, and Lotichius of the capture of Magdeburg. Does the fulfilment prove the miraculous inspiration of the oracle in these cases? *

But to recur to the other test: There are statements in the prophets which are not true—*predictions that did not come to pass.* Under this rubric may be placed three of the most celebrated predictions in the Old Testament.

1. *Jeremiah's Prediction of the Seventy Years of Exile.*

It was an easy thing, in Jeremiah's position, to see that the little nation of Judea could not hold out against the Babylonian forces, and therefore must experience the common fate of nations they conquered, and be carried into exile.† But would the Lord forsake his people—the seed of Abraham? A pious Jew could not believe it. It was unavoidable, with the common opinion of his countrymen, that he should expect their subsequent restoration. But why predict an exile of just seventy years, unless miracu-

* See De Wette, *ubi supra*, Vol. II.

† On this custom of the Chaldees, see Heeren, Ideen, Vol. I.; Gesenius on Isaiah xxxvi. 16.

lously directed?* He may have used that term for an indefinite period—a common practice;—in that case there is no miracle. But on the other hand, if he predicted an exile of just seventy years, the oracle was a failure. The people were not carried into captivity all at once: from which of the two or three times of deportation shall we set out? The books of Kings and Chronicles differ somewhat,† but to take the chronology of Jeremiah himself, if the passage be genuine,‡ the deportation began in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, 599 before Christ; it was continued in the year 588, and concluded in 583. The exile ended in the year 536. The longest period that can be made out extends to but sixty-three, and the shortest to but forty-seven years. To make out the seventy years, we must date arbitrarily from the year 606.

2. *Ezekiel's Oracle against Tyre.*

This prophet predicts that Nebuchadnezzar shall destroy Tyre.§ The prediction is clear and distinct; the destruction is to be complete and total—"With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets; he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrison shall go down to the ground. I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built up no more." But it was not so. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to raise the siege after investing the city for thirteen years, and to go and fight the Egyptians. Then, sixteen years after the first oracle, Ezekiel takes back his own words—"The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus; every head was made bald," with the chafing of the helmet, "every shoulder was peeled," with the pressure of burthens; "yet he had no wages, nor

* Jer. xxv. † See 2 Kings, xxiv. xxv.; 2 Chron. xxxvi.
‡ Jer. lii. 28–30; but see verses 4–15. § Ezek. xxvi. 1, *et seq.*

his army from Tyrus. Therefore, behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar."*

These things speak for themselves, and show the nature of the prophetic discourses,—that they were moral addresses, or poetical odes. Ezekiel's celebrated prediction of an impossible city† is a standing monument of the prophetic character, and of the lasting folly of interpreters. It were easy to collect other instances of palpable mistake.‡

3. *The alleged Predictions of Jesus as the Messiah.*

The Messianic prophecies are the most famous of all. It is commonly pretended that there are in the Old Testament clear and distinct predictions of Jesus of Nazareth; but I do not hesitate to say, it has never been shown that there is, in the whole of the Old Testament, one single sentence that in the plain and natural sense of the words foretells the birth, life, or death of Jesus of Nazareth. If the Scriptures have seventy-two senses, as one of the Rabbins declares, —or if it foretells whatever comes to pass, as Augustine, —and means all it can be made to mean, as many moderns seem to think,—why, predictions and types of Jesus may be found in the first chapter of Genesis, in Noah and Abraham and Samson, as well as in Virgil's fourth Eclogue, the Odes of Horace, and the story of the Trihemerine Hercules.

The Messianic expectations and prophecies seem to have originated in this way: After the happy and successful period of David and Solomon, the kingdom was divided into Judah and Israel, the two tribes and the ten; the national prosperity declined. Pious men hoped for better times; they naturally connected these hopes with a personal deliverer, a descendant of David, their most popular king.

* Ezek. xxix. 17, *et seq.* See Isaiah, xxiii., and Gesenius's remarks, in his Commentar. Vol. I. p. 711, *et seq.*; Rosenmüller, Alterth. Vol. II. Pt. I. p. 34.

† Ch. xl.–xlviii.

‡ On the Prophecies in general, see the Essay of Prof. Stuart, in Bib. Rep. Vol. II. p. 217, *et seq.*; of Hengstenberg, ibid. p. 139, *et seq.* See also the able Essay of Knobel, Prophetismus der Hebräer, Vol. I. Einleit.

The deliverer would unite the two kingdoms under the old form. A poetic fancy endowed him with wonderful powers; made him a model of goodness. Different poets arrayed their expected hero in imaginary drapery to suit their own conceptions. Malachi gives him a forerunner. The Jews were the devoutest of nations; the popular deliverer must be a religious man. They were full of pious faith; so the darker the present, the brighter shone the Pharos of Hope in the future. Sometimes this deliverer was called the Messiah. This term is not common in the Old Testament, however, but is sometimes applied to Cyrus by the pseudo-Isaiah.*

These hopes and predictions of a deliverer involved several important things:—a reunion of the divided tribes; a return of the exiles; the triumph and extension of the kingdom of Israel, its eternal duration and perfect happiness. Idolatry was to be rooted out; the nations improved in morals and religion; Truth and Righteousness were to reign; Jehovah to be reconciled with his people; all of them were to be taught of God; other nations were to come up to Jerusalem, and be blessed. But the Mosaic Law was to be eternal; the old ritual to last forever; Jerusalem to be the capital of the Messianic kingdom, and the Jewish nation to be reëstablished in greater pomp than in the times of David. Are these predictions of Jesus of Nazareth? He was not the Messiah of Jewish expectation—of the prophets' foretelling;—the farthest from it possible. The predictions demanded a political and visible kingdom in Palestine, with Jerusalem for its capital, and its ritual the old Law: the Kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. The ten tribes,—have they come back to the home of their fathers? They have perished and are swallowed up in the tide of the nations, no one knowing the place of their burial;—the kingdom of the two tribes soon went to the ground. These are

* Many chapters of Isaiah have been shown to be spurious. The passages, chap. xii.-lxvi., xiii.-xiv., xxiii.-xxvii., xxxiv., xxxv., are of this character.

notorious facts. The Jews are right when they say, *their* predicted Messiah has not come. Does the Old Testament foretell a suffering Saviour—his kingdom not of this world —crucified—raised from the dead? The idea is foreign to the Hebrew Scriptures. Well might a Jew ask, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" To trust the uncertain record of the New Testament, Jesus was slow to accept the name of the Messiah; he knew the "people would take him by force and make him a king." But what means the triumphal entry into Jerusalem? He forbids his disciples to speak of his Messiahship—"See that thou tell no man of it;" only proclaims it at Samaria; lets John draw his own inference, whether or not he must "look for another;" thinks Simon Peter could only find it out by inspiration. Was it not that he knew he was not the Messiah of the prophets, so never formally assumed the title; but, knowing that he was the true and only deliverer, a thousand times greater than their impossible Messiah, suffered the name to be affixed to him, and made the most of the popular Idea? Or, was he himself mistaken? It concerns us little. But this remains, that he was much more than the Jews looked for. The Jewish Christians mistook the matter: Paul would prove that he was the Messiah of the prophets. Mistakes in Theology, like bits of glass in a kaleidoscope, are repeated again and again, in fantastic combinations.*

III. THE WRITINGS.

Under this head are comprised the remaining books of the Old Testament. Here is the dramatic poem of Job, a

* See De Wette, Dogmatik, § 137–142; Opuscula, I. p. 23–31; the numerous Christologies of modern times, and the Introductions to the Old Testament. See also Strauss, Leben Jesu, § 60–68; Hennell, *ubi sup.*, chap. i.–ii. and xii.–xiii. See also Bretschneider, Dogmatik, § 30, 34, p. 356, *et seq.*; § 137, p. 166, *et seq.*; Hahn, Knapp, Hase, Wegscheider, &c.; and Hengstenberg's Christology.

work of surprising beauty, and full of truth. But its author denies the immortality of the soul, and though he attempts "to justify the ways of God to man," he yet leaves the question undecided as he found it. In the Psalms we have beautiful prayers, mixed up with their local occasions; penitential hymns, songs of praise, expressions of hope, faith, trust in God, that have never been surpassed. The devotion of some of these sweet lyrics is beyond praise. But at the same time here are the most awful denunciations that speech ever spoke. In the following passage the writer denounces his enemies: "Set thou a wicked man over him. Let Satan stand at his right hand; when he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children."* These are the words of a man angry and revengeful;—the Psalms abound with similar imprecations. To maintain they came directly from the God of love, is to forget Reason, Conscience, and Religion, which teach us to love our enemies, to pray for them that persecute us. The book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs speak for themselves, and neither need nor claim any more inspiration than other collections of Proverbs or Oriental amatory Idyls. The latter belongs to the same class with the writings of Anacreon. The somewhat doubtful book of Ecclesiastes seems to be the work of a sceptic. He denies the immortality of the soul with great clearness; thinks wisdom and folly are alike vanity. Though he concludes most touchingly in praise of virtue on the whole, and declares the fear of God, and keeping his commandments, to be the whole duty of man, yet this conclusion is vitiated by the former precept, "Be not righteous over much." The

* Ps. cix. 6, *et seq.* See also Ps. cxxxvii.

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Lamentations of Jeremiah have as little claim to inspiration.*

The historical books of this division present some peculiarities. Ezra and Nehemiah are valuable historical documents, though implicit faith is by no means to be placed in them. The book of Esther is entirely devoid of religious interest, and seems to be a romance designed to show that the Jews will always be provided for. The brief book of Ruth may be an historical or a fictitious work.

The book of Daniel is a perfect unique in the Old Testament. It professes to have been written by a captive Jew, at Babylon, in the beginning of the sixth century before Christ;—it contains accounts of surprising miracles, dreams, visions; men cast into a den of lions and a furnace of fire, yet escaping unhurt; a man transformed to a beast, and eating grass like an ox for some years, and then restored to human shape; a miraculous and spectral handwriting on the palace-wall;—grotesque fancies that remind us of the Arabian Nights and the Talmud. To judge from internal evidence, it was written in the first part of the second century, perhaps about one hundred and sixty or seventy years before Christ, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The author seems to have a political and moral end in view, and to write for the encouragement of his countrymen, perhaps designing that his work should pass for what it is, a politico-religious romance.†

All of the books hitherto mentioned seem written by earnest men, with no intention to deceive; their manly honesty is everywhere apparent. But the book of Chronicles is of a very different character. Here is an obvious attempt on the writer's part to exalt the character of orthodox kings, and depress that of heretical kings; to bring forward the Priests

* See Leclerc's Five Letters concerning the Inspiration, &c., Lond. 1690; and on the other hand, William Lowth's Vindication of the Divine Authority, &c., Lond. 1699; and Gaussen and Horne, *ubi sup.*

† See De Wette, *ubi supra*, Vol. II. § 253, *et seq.*

and the Levites, and give everything a ceremonial appearance. This design will be obvious to any one who reads the stories in Chronicles, and then turns to the parallel passages in Samuel and Kings.* To take but a single instance: the writer of the book of Samuel gives an account of David; tells of his good and evil qualities; does not pass over his cruelty, nor extenuate his sin;—but in Chronicles there is not a word of this; nothing of the crime of imperial adultery; nothing of Nathan's rousing apologue, and Thou-art-the-man. The thing speaks for itself.

Now if these books have any *divine* authority, what shall we do with *such* contradictions?—deny the fact? We live too long after Dr. Faustus for so easy a device. Shall we say, with a modern divine, the true believer will accept both statements with the same implicit faith? This also may be doubtful.

To look back upon the field we have passed, it must be confessed that the claims made for the Old Testament have no foundation in fact; its books, like others, have a mingling of good and evil. We see a gradual progress of ideas therein, keeping pace with the civilization of the world;—vestiges of ignorance, superstition, folly, of unreclaimed selfishness, yet linger there; fact and fiction are strangely blended; the common and miraculous, the divine and the human, run into one another. We find rude notions of God in some parts, though in others the most lofty;—here the moral and religious sentiment are insulted; there, is beautiful instruction for both. Human imperfections meet us everywhere in the Old Testament;—the passions of man are ascribed to God. The Jews had a Mythology as well as the Greeks. They transform law into miracles—earth into a dream-land; it rains manna for eight and thirty years, and the smitten rock pours out water. We see a gradual

* The passages are conveniently arranged for this purpose, side by side, in Jahn's edition of the Hebrew Bible.

progress in this as in all mythologies. First, God appears in person; walks in the garden in the cool of the day; eats and drinks; makes contracts with his favourites; is angry, resentful, "sudden and quick in quarrel," and changes his plans, at the advice of a cool man. Then it is the angel of God who appears to man;—it is deemed fatal for man to see Jehovah. His messenger comes to Manoah, and vanishes in the flame of the sacrifice; the angel of Jehovah appears to David. Next, it is only in dreams, visions, types, and symbols, that the Most High approaches his children. He speaks to them by night—comes in the rush of thoughts, but is not seen; the personal Form, and the visible Angel, have faded and disappeared as the daylight assumed its power. The nation advanced; its Religion and Mythology advanced with it. Then again, sometimes God is represented as but a local deity; Jacob is surprised to find Him in a foreign land;—next, he is only the God of the Hebrews;—at last, the ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

There is a similar progress in the notions of the service God demands. Abraham must offer Isaac; with Moses, slain beasts are sufficient. Micah has outgrown the Mosaic form in some respects, and says, "Shall Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams; shall I give the first-born of my body for the sin of my soul? What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" A spiritual man in the midst of a formal people saw the pure truth which they saw not. Does the Old Testament claim to be master of the soul? By no means: it is only a phantom conjured up by Superstition that scares us in our sleep. Does the truth it contains make it a miraculous book? It is poor logic which thinks that what is *false* can cease to be false, though never so many wonders are wrought in its defence.*

* On the Old Testament, its authors' inspiration, &c., see some valuable remarks in Spinoza, Tract. Theol. Polit. ch. i.-x., xii.-xiii.

CHAPTER III.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLAIMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO BE A DIVINE, MIRACULOUS, OR INFALLIBLE COMPOSITION.

LET us look the facts of the New Testament also in the face. Some men are glad to abandon the Old Testament to the Jews, but fear to look into the foundation of the Christian Scriptures, lest it be found sandy. Does much depend on the New Testament? Then the more carefully must its claims be examined. Truth courts the light, its deeds never evil. Are the writings of the New Testament divine, miraculous, and infallible compositions? if the Old Testament fail, the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice? Such is the prevalent opinion with us.* After what was said above respecting the points to be proved before such a conclusion could be admitted, it becomes less difficult to decide this question. The general remarks respecting the inspiration of the Old Testament apply also to the new,† and need not be repeated. Bearing these in mind, let us subject these writings to the same test. To do this, we must examine the works themselves. This general thesis may be affirmed: All the writings in the New Testament, as well as the Old, contain marks of their human origin, of human weakness and imperfection.

* See Faustus Socinus, De Auctoritate Sac. Script. ch. i. Here he defends the Scriptures against Christians, and in ch. ii. against the not-Christians.

† See above, Book IV. Chap. I. and II.

Now in the New Testament, as in the Old, we have spurious works mixed with the genuine. To separate the former from the latter, is not an easy work—perhaps not possible, at this day. However, there are some books of unquestionable genuineness, and others whose spurious character is almost demonstrated. Modern criticism and ancient authority seem to decide that the Epistle to the Hebrews is not the work of Paul, but of some unknown author; that the second Epistle of Peter is not from that apostle, but from one who, as Scaliger said, "abused his leisure time;" that the second and third of John, the Epistles of James and Jude, are not from the apostolic persons whose names they bear; and that the book of the Revelation is not the work of John the Evangelist. Objections have been brought against some other epistles, which however do not appear so well founded,—and against some of the Evangelists, which will be presently alluded to. Then, if the above remarks be correct, there are seven works in the New Testament, whose claim to apostolical authority is doubted with more or less reason. As these disputed writings themselves are not of any great practical importance in this connection, even if genuine, they may be neglected in the present examination.* If the other writings, whose claim to an apostolic origin is stronger, are not found miraculous and infallible, still less shall be expected of these. The rest of the New Testament may be divided into the Epistolary and the Historical writings.

I. OF THE EPISTOLARY WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

These are the oldest Christian documents; the works of Paul, Peter, and John, the most illustrious of the early dis-

* The *non-apostolical* origin of these seven books is by no means *fixed* and agreed upon by all the critics. See the discussions in the Introductions of Michäelis, Hug. de Wette, and the numerous monograms on these points. Some information may be found in a popular shape, in the little work of Olshausen, Genuineness of the New Testament, Andover, 1838.

ciples, the "chiefest apostles," and most instrumental in founding the Christian church. If any of the early Christians received miraculous inspiration, it must be the Apostles; if any of the Apostles, it must be one or all of these three. To determine their claims, the works of the three may be examined together, for the sake of brevity.

Now, at the first view of these fifteen epistles, it does not appear that any miraculous inspiration was required to write these, more than the letters of St. Cyprian or Fenelon. They contain nothing above the reach of human faculties; and to *assume* a miraculous agency, is contrary to the inductive method, to say the least of it.

Do the writers ever claim a *peculiar* and miraculous inspiration? The farthest from it possible. Paul speaks of his inspiration, but he admits that, of all Christians, "No man can say Jesus is the Lord," that is, Christianity is true, "but by the Holy Ghost." He refers wisdom, faith, eloquence, learning, skill in the interpretation of tongues, ability to teach or to heal diseases, to inspiration. "All these worketh that one and self-same spirit."* The spirit of Christ was in all Christian hearts; they all received the "Spirit of God." That was Paul's view of inspiration. He and his fellow-apostles were servants that helped others to believe. He had the gift of teaching in a more eminent degree, and enjoyed a greater "abundance of revelations," and therefore taught. John carries the doctrine of the universal inspiration of Christians still farther.

Now, if the Apostles had this miraculous and peculiar inspiration, and through modesty did not state it, they must yet have known the fact. But it is notorious they taught not in the name of any private inspiration, but in that of Jesus.†

* 1 Cor. xii. 1, *et seq.*

† This point has been ably touched by Spinoza, Tract. Theol. Polit. chap. xi. ed. Paulus, Vol. I. p. 315, *et seq.* From him both Leclerc (Lettres des quelques Juifs)

But even if the Apostles claimed miraculous and infallible inspiration, and taught with authority they pretended to derive therefrom, still their claim could not be granted; for, if infallibly inspired, they must be ready for all emergencies. Now a practical question arose in a novel case, which was a test of their inspiration: Should they admit the Gentiles to Christianity? The book of Acts relates that Peter required a special and miraculous vision to enlighten him on this head. He seems surprised to find that "God is no respecter of persons," but will allow all religious men of any nation to become Christians. Had he been miraculously inspired before, to what purpose the vision?

If the Apostles were infallibly inspired, they could not disagree on any point. Now another question comes up: Shall the Gentiles keep the old ceremonial Law of Moses, and be circumcised? It would seem that men of common freedom of thought, who had heard the teachings of Jesus, would not need miraculous help to decide so plain a question. If they had the alleged inspiration, each must know at once how to decide, and all would decide in the same way without consultation. But such was not the fact; they were divided on this very question—plain as it is—and held a meeting of the Christians; the "apostles and elders came together *to consider* this matter." It was not a plain case; there was "much disputing" about it. Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, spoke against the Law; James, as chairman of the meeting, sums up the matter before putting the question, takes a middle ground, proposes a resolution that *all* the Mosaic ritual should not be imposed upon the Gentile converts, but only a few of its prohibitions, which he reckons "necessary things." He comes to this conclusion, not by special inspiration—of which no mention is made in the meeting—but from Peter's statement of facts, and

and Rich. Simon (Hist. Crit. du V. T.) seem to have drawn some of their stores. See also the acute remarks of Lessing, Werke, ed. Carlsruhe, 1824, Vol. XXIV. p. 84, *et seq.*

from a passage in the Prophet who says, that "all the Gentiles might seek after the Lord." The question was put; the chairman's motion prevailed; a circular was drawn up in the name of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, and sent to the Churches. But Paul and Peter seem to have disregarded it,—one going beyond, the other falling short of its requisitions.

Then, again, the Apostles differed on some points. Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention, and separated.* Could infallible men fall out? Paul had little respect for those "that were apostles before him," and "withstood Peter to the face."†

These Apostles were mistaken in several things; in their interpretation of the Old Testament, as any one may see by examining the passages cited by Peter in the Acts,‡ or the writings of Paul.§ They were all mistaken in this capital doctrine,—that Jesus would return to Judea, the general resurrection and judgment take place, and the world be destroyed within a very few years, during the lifetime of the Apostles. This is a very strongly-marked feature in their teaching.‖ From the doubtful epistle ascribed to Peter, it seems that as times went by and the world continued, scoffers very naturally doubted the truth of this opinion,ǂ but were assured it would hold good.

II. OF THE HISTORICAL WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Here we have, apparently, the works of Matthew and John, two of the immediate disciples of Jesus, and of Mark and Luke, the companions of Peter and Paul. The first

* Acts, xv. 39. † Gal. i. 11—ii. 14.

‡ Acts, ii. 14–21, 25–34; iii. 18, 21–24; iv. 25, 26, *et al.*

§ Gal. iv. 24, *et seq.*; 1 Cor. x. 4, *et seq.*, *et al.*

‖ See the Essay of Mr. Norton on this point, in Statement of Reasons, &c., p. 297, *et seq.*; and De Potter, *ubi sup.*, Vol. I. p. cxl. *et seq.*

ǂ 2 Pet. iii. 4, *et seq.*

question is, Have we really the works of these four writers? It is a question which can by no means be readily and satisfactorily answered in the affirmative. However, it cannot be entered upon in this place;* but admitting, in argument, that the works are genuine, at the first view there seems no need of miraculous inspiration in the case of honest men wishing to relate what they had seen, heard, or felt. It is not easy to see why miraculous and infallible inspiration was needed to write the memoirs of Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles, more than the memoirs of Socrates, or the Acts of the Martyrs. The writers never claim such an inspiration. Matthew and Mark never speak of themselves as writers; Luke refers to certain "eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word" as his authority for the facts of the Gospel. John claims it as little as the others, though an unknown writer, at the end of his Gospel, testifies to the truth of the narrative.†

But even if they made this claim, so often made for them, it could not be granted, for their testimony does not agree. The Jesus of the Synoptics differs very widely from the Jesus of John, in his actions, discourses, and general spiritual character,—as much as the Socrates of Xenophon from that of Plato. This point was acknowledged by the Fathers. But not to dwell on a general disagreement, nor to come down to the perpetual and well-known disagreement in minute details, there is a most striking difference between the genealogies of Jesus, as given by Matthew and Luke. Both agree that Jesus was descended from David by the father's side; but Matthew counts *twenty-five* ances-

* On the affirmative side, see Paley, Evidences, Part I.; the masterly Treatise of Mr. Norton, Genuineness of the Gospels; Prof. Stuart's review of it in Bib. Rep. for 1837–8; and Lardner's Credibility, &c. See, on the other side, the popular but important remarks of Hennell, *ubi sup.*, ch. iii.–vi.; Strauss, Glaubenslehre, § 15; and the Life of Jesus, by Strauss, Theile, Neander, &c. &c.; the Introductions of Hug. De Wette and Credner. See also Bruno Baur's Kritik der evang. Geschichte des Johannes, 1840.

† Luke, i. 1, *et seq.* (See Acts, i. 1, *et seq.*) John, xxi. 24.

tors between David and Joseph the husband of Mary, and Luke enumerates *forty-two* ancestors, of whom thirty-eight are never mentioned by Matthew; one derives his descent from the illustrious Solomon, the other from the obscure Nathan; one makes Nazareth the dwelling-place of Joseph, the other Bethlehem. They disagree, likewise, in numerous particulars of the early history, such as the miraculous appearance of the star, the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the songs, the angels, and the dreams.* Yet notwithstanding these genealogies, both agree that Jesus had no human father,—a fact never referred to by Mark or John, by Peter or Paul, nor in the recorded words of Jesus himself, or the people about him, who took him for the son of Joseph the carpenter. If he had no human father, how was he descended from David? Are we to believe a miracle so surprising, on the doubtful statement of two men whom we know nothing of, but who contradict themselves and one another, and relate the strangest marvels? Is it a part of Religion to believe such stories?—what else would we believe on such evidence? It were easy to point out other disagreements in the words, and actions, and predictions ascribed to Jesus; in the accounts of his resurrection, and the impossible events of his subsequent history; but it is not needed for the present purpose.† The book of the Acts, of a mythical and legendary character, requires no special examination.

These things do not militate against the fairness of the Evangelists. Had they been deceivers, we should not have had their narrative,—so beautiful, so touching, so stamped with reality in some parts, with simple-heartedness in all,—

* See these discrepancies ably stated by Mr. Norton, *ubi sup.*, p. liii. *et seq.*; and Strauss, Leben Jesu, § 19–38; and the popular statement in Harwood, *ubi sup.*, p. 20, *et seq.*; Hennell, *ubi sup.*, ch. iii. v. Compare the Apocryphal Gospels in Theile, Codex Apocryphus, N. T., Leips. 1832, Vol. I.

† See Evanson, Dissonance of the Evangelists, Gloucester, 1805; Strauss, § 132–142; Wolfenbüttel. Fragmente, über Auferstehungsgeschichte, and the numerous replies.

but a consistent and lawyer-like "statement of facts" with reflections. But throughout the whole there is not a word of admiration or even sympathy bestowed upon Jesus. The honesty of the writers seems beyond question. This, however, must be admitted, that the facts of the case will not warrant the claim of miraculous and infallible inspiration that is made for them, and that we are to examine with great caution before we accept their statements, which, in detail, have often but a low degree of historical credibility.

These facts cannot be hushed up, nor put out of sight; we must look them in the face. They have pained already many a breaking heart, who could not separate the truth of Christianity from the errors of its record—felt with groans that could not be uttered. It need not be so. Christianity is one thing; the Christian documents a very different matter. In them, as in the Old Testament, there is a mythology;—the natural and the supernatural are confounded. The Gospels cannot be taken as historical "authorities," until a searching criticism has separated their mythological and legendary narratives from what is purely a matter of fact. Some attempt to remove the difficulty by striking out the offensive passages,* and others by explaining them away, and still claim miraculous infallibility for all the rest, which the writers never claim for themselves, nor allow to one another. Let us rest on things as they are; not try to base our Church on things that are not.

It may be asked, "If there is no foundation of fact for the miraculous part of the narrative, why did the writers dwell so much on this part?" The question may be asked in the case of the Catholic miracles; those of St. Bernard; of witchcraft and possessions before named. It is difficult at least to determine what lay at the bottom of the matter. But this is a fixed point, that Devils, Ghosts, and Witches

† See Norton, Genuineness, p. liii. *et seq.*

only appear where they were previously believed in,—and there they continually appear; "imagination bodies forth the forms of things not seen." The Catholic sees the Virgin, and the Mormonite finds miracles to-day: will not the same cause—whatever it be—help to explain the visions of Paul, the angels and miracles of the New Testament? It is not many years since the divines of New England made collections of accounts of the devil appearing to men. If a religious teacher should appear at the time and place as Jesus appeared, it would be surprising, almost beyond belief, if miraculous tales were not connected with his birth, life, and death. Antiquity is full of sons of God and wonder-workers. The story of Lazarus, and even that of the Ascension, is not without its parallels.

But if all the charges against the New Testament are true, what then? Why, this:—honest men; noble, pious, simple-hearted men; the zealous Apostles of Christianity; the first to espouse it; willing to leave all—comfort, friends, life—for its sake,—after all, were but men, such as are born in these days, fallible like ourselves; they shared, like us, the ignorance and superstition of the times; and though earnest in looking, saw not all things, but, as the wisest of them said, "through a glass, darkly,"—and made some confusion among things they did see. Do we ask miraculous evidence to prove that Jesus lived a divine life? We can have no such testimony. We know that if he taught absolute Religion, Christianity is absolutely true; that if he did not teach it, still absolute Religion remains the everlasting Rock of Faith, in spite of the defects of historical evidence, or the limitations of this or that man. Has the New Testament exaggerated the greatness and embellished the beauty of Jesus? Measure his religious doctrine by that of the time and place he lived in, or that of any time and any place—yes, by the doctrine of eternal truth;—consider what a work his words and deeds have wrought in

the world; that he is still the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE to millions; that he is reckoned a GOD by the mass of Christians—his Word their standard of truth, his Life the Ideal they see too far above them in the heavens for their imitation; remember that the greatest minds have seen no farther, and added nothing to the doctrine of Religion; that the richest hearts have felt no deeper, and added nothing to the sentiment of Religion; have set no loftier aim, no truer method than his, of PERFECT LOVE TO GOD AND MAN; —and then ask, Have the Evangelists overrated him? We can learn few facts about Jesus; but measure him by the shadow he has cast into the world—no, by the light he has shed upon it, not by things in which Hercules was his equal, and Vishnu his superior. Shall we be told, Such a man never lived; the whole story is a lie? Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived—that their story is a lie:—but who did their works, and thought their thought? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABSOLUTE RELIGION INDEPENDENT OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS—THE BIBLE AS IT IS.

THIS doctrine of the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures has greater power with Christians at this day than in Paul's time. In the first ages of Christianity, each Apostle was superior to the Old Testament. There were no Scriptures to rely on, for the New Testament was not written, and the Old Testament was hostile. The Law stood in their way—"a law of sin and death;" the greatest prophets were inferior to John the Baptist, and the least in the Christian kingdom was greater than he;* all before Jesus were "thieves and robbers" in comparison. Yet Christianity stood without the Old Testament;—it went forward without it; made converts, and produced a wondrous change in the world. The Old Testament was the servant, not the master, of the early Christians. Each church used what it saw fit: some had the whole of the Old Testament; some but a part;—others added the Apocrypha, for there was no settled canon, "published by authority, and appointed to be read in churches." So it was with the New Testament;—some received more than we, others less. Such men as Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, refer to some other books, just

* The opinion of some disciples about the excellence of that kingdom may be seen in Irenæus, Lib. II. ch. 33, where he speaks of the Vine-Stocks.

as they quote the New Testament. The canon of the New Testament was less certain than the Old. Men followed usage, tradition, or good sense, in this matter, and at last the present collection was fixed by authority. But by what test were its limits decided? Alas! by no certain criterion.* Let us look at things as they are. Here is a collection of ancient books, spurious and genuine, Hebrew and Greek. The one part belongs to a mode of worship, formal and obsolete; the other to a religion, actual, spiritual, still alive. The one gives us a Jehovah jealous and angry; the other a Father full of love. Each writer in both divisions proves by his imperfections that the earth did not formerly produce a different race of men. They contradict one another, and some relate what no testimony can render less than absurd; but yet all taken together, spite of their imperfections and positive faults, form such a collection of religious writings as the world never saw, so deep, so rich, so divine. Are not the Christian Gospels and the Hebrew Psalms still the best part of the Sunday service in the church? Truly there is but one Religion for the Jew, the Gentile, and the Christian, though many theologies for each.

Now, unless we reject this treasure entirely, one of two things must be done: either we must pretend to believe the whole, absurdities and all; make one part just as valuable as the other,—the Law of Moses as the Gospel of Jesus—David's curse as Christ's blessing,—and then we make the Bible our master, who puts Common Sense and Reason to silence, and drives Conscience and the religious Sentiment out of the Church: or else we must accept what is true, good, and divine therein; take each part for what it is worth; gather the good together, and leave the bad to itself,—and then we make the Bible our servant and helper, who

* On the use of the New Testament in the early times, see Credner, Beiträge zur Einleit, in biblischen schriften, ch. i. p. 1-90; Münscher, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Vol. I. § 30-84; Augusti, Christlichen Archäologie, Vol. VI. p. 1-244; and the work referred to in the Preface, Vol. 1. § 18-29.

assists Common Sense and Reason, stimulates Conscience and Religion, co-working with them all. A third thing is not possible.

Which shall be done? The practical answer was given long ago; it has always been given, except in times of fanatical excitement. Because there is chaff and husks in the Bible, are we to eat thereof, when there is bread enough, and to spare? Pious men neglect what does not edify. Who reads gladly the curses of the Psalmist—chapters that make God a man of war, a jealous God, the butcher of the nations? Certainly but few. Let them be exhorted to repentance. Men cannot gather grapes of thorns, grasp them never so lovingly; honest men will leave the thorns, or pluck them up. Now Criticism—which the thinking character of the age demands—asks men to do consciously and thoroughly, what they have always done imperfectly and with no science but that of a pious heart; that is, to divide the Word rightly; separate mythology from history, fact from fiction—what is religious and of God, from what is earthly and not of God; to take the Bible for what it is worth. Fearful of the issue, we may put off the question a few years; may insist as strongly as ever on what we know to be false; ask men to believe it, because in the records, and thus drive bad men to hypocrisy, good men to madness, and thinking men to "infidelity;"—we may throw obstacles in the way of Religion and Morality, and tie the millstone of the Old and New Testaments about the neck of Piety, as before;—we may call men "Infidels and Atheists," whom Reason and Religion compel to uplift their voice against the idolatry of the church; or we may attempt to smooth over the matter, and say nothing about it, or not what we think. But it will not do: the day of Fire and Fagots is ended; the toothless "Guardian of the Faith" can only bark. The question will come,—though alas for that man by whom it comes!

Other religions have their sacred books—their Korans, Vedas, Shasters—which must be received in spite of Reason, as masters of the soul. Some would put the Bible on the same ground; they glory in believing whatever is prefaced with a Thus-saith-the-Lord. But then all superiority of the Bible over these books disappears for ever; the daylight gives place to the shadow; the Law of Sin and Death casts out the Law of the Spirit of Life. Let honest Reason and Religion pursue their own way.

CHAPTER V.

CAUSE OF THE FALSE AND THE REAL VENERATION FOR THE BIBLE.

THE indolent and the sensual love to have a visible master in spiritual things, who will spare them the agony of thought. Credulity, Ignorance, and Superstition, conjure up phantoms to attend them. Some honest men find it difficult to live nobly and divine; to keep the well of life pure and undisturbed, the inward ear always open and quick to the voice of God in the soul. They see, too, how often the ignorant, the wicked, the superstitious, and the fanatical, confound their own passions with the still small voice of God; they see what evil, deep and dreadful, comes of this confusion. Such is the force of prejudice, indolence, habit, that they find it sometimes difficult to distinguish between right and wrong; they love to lean on the Most High, and the Bible is declared His Word. They say, therefore, by their action, "Let us have some outward rule and authority, which, being infallible, shall help the still smallness of God's voice in the heart; it will bless us when weak; we will make it our master, and obey its voice; it shall be to us as a god, and we will fall down and worship it." But alas! it is not so. The Word of God—no Scripture will hold that;—it speaks in a language no honest mind can fail to read. Such seem the most prominent causes that have made the Bible an Idol of the Christians.

No doubt it will be said, "Such views are dangerous, for the mass of men must always take Authority for Truth, not Truth for Authority." But are they not true? If so, the consequences are not ours; they belong to the Author of truth, who can manage his own affairs without our meddling. Is the wrong way safer than the right? No doubt it was reckoned dangerous to abandon the worship of Diana, of the cross, the saints and their relics; but the world stands, though "the image that fell down from Jupiter" is forgotten. If these doctrines be true, men need not fear that they shall have no "standard of religious faith and practice." Reason, Conscience, Religion, still remain; God's voice in Nature; His Word in the Soul. His Laws remain ever unchanged, though we set up our idols or pluck them down. We still have the same guide with Moses and David, Socrates and Zoroaster, Paul and John and Luther, Fenelon, Taylor, and Fox;—yes, the same guide that led Jesus, the first-born of many brothers, in his steep and lonely pilgrimage.

This doctrine takes nothing from the Bible but its errors, which only weaken its strength; its truth remains brilliant and burning in the light of life. It calls us away from each outward standard to the eternal truths of God; from the letter and the imperfect Scripture of the Word to the living Word itself. Then we see the true relation the Bible sustains to the soul; the cause of the *real* esteem in which it is held, is seen to be in its moral and religious truths; their power and loveliness appear. These have had the greatest influence on the loftiest minds and the lowliest hearts for eighteen hundred years. How they have written themselves all over the world, deepest in the best of men! What greatness of soul has been found amid the fragrant leaves of the Bible, sufficient to lead men to embrace its truths, though at the expense of accepting tales which make the blood curdle!

Take the Bible for what is true in it, and the first chap-

ter of Genesis is a grand hymn of creation, a worthy prelude to the sublime chants that follow. It sings this truth: The world was not always; is not the work of chance, but of the living God; all things are good, made to be blest. The writer—who, perhaps, never thought he was writing "an article of faith"—if he were a Jew, might superstitiously refer the Sabbath to the time of creation and the agency of God,—just as the Greek refers one festival to Hercules, and another to Bacchus. Then oriental Piety comes beautiful from the grave hewn in the rock by our dull Theology; utters her word of counsel and hope; sings her mythological poem, and warms the heart,—but does not teach theology, or physical science.

The sweet notes of David's prayer; his mystic hymn of praise, so full of rippling life; his lofty Psalm, which seems to unite the warbling music of the wind, the sun's glance, and the rush of the lightning; which calls on the mountain and the sea, and beast, and bird, and man, to join his full heart,—all these shall be sweet and elevating;—but we shall leave his pernicious curse to perish where it fell.

The excellence of the Hebrew devotional hymns has never been surpassed. Heathenism, Christianity, with all their science, arts, literature, bright and many-coloured, have little that approach these. They are the despair of imitators; still the uttered prayer of the Christian world. Tell us of Greece, whose air was redolent of song; its language such as Jove might speak; its sages, heroes, poets, honoured in every clime;—they have no psalm of prayer and praise like these Hebrews, the devoutest of men, who saw God always before them, ready to take them up when father and mother let them fall.

The old prophets were men of stalwart and robust character, set off by a masculine piety that puts to shame our puny littleness of heart. They saw hope the plainest when danger was most imminent, and never despaired. Fear of the people, the rulers, the priests, could not awe them to

silence, nor gold buy smooth things from the prophet's tongue. They left Hypocrisy, with his weeds and weepers, and feigning but unstained handkerchief, to follow the coffin he knew to be empty, and went their own way, as men. What shall screen the guilty from the prophet's word? Even David is met with a Thou-art-the-man. What if they were stoned, imprisoned, sawn asunder? It was a prophet's reward. They did not prophesy smooth things; they gave the truth and took blows, not asking love for love. If these men are set up as masters of the soul, Justice must break her staff over their heads; but view them as patriots whom danger aroused from the repose of life,—as pious men awakened by concern for the public virtue, and nobler men never spoke speech.

> Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old.

Little needs now be said of the New Testament—of the simple truth that rustles in its leaves, its parables, epistles, where Paul lifts up his manly voice, and John pours out the mystic melody of his faith. Why tell of the deep words of Jesus? Have we exhausted their meaning? The world—has it outgrown love to God and man? They still act in gentle bosoms, giving strength to the strong, and justice and meekness and charity and faith to beautiful souls, long tried and oppressed. There is no need of new words to tell of this.

Now it is not in nature to respect the false, and yet reverence the true. Call the Bible master—we do not see the excellence it has. Take it as other books—we have its beauty, truth, Religion, not its deformities, fables, and theology. We shall not believe in ghosts, though Isaiah did; nor in devils, though Jesus teach that there are such. We shall see the excellence of Paul in his manly character, not in the miracles wrought by his apron; the nobleness of Jesus, in the doctrine he taught and the life he lived, not in

the walk on the water or the miraculous draughts of fish. We shall care little about the endless "genealogies and old-wives' fables," though still deemed essential by many—but much for being good and doing good. Our Faith—let him shake down the Andes who has an arm for that work.

On the other hand, he that accepts the monstrous prodigies of the Gospels; is delighted to believe that Jesus laid stress on forms, damning all but the baptized; that he gave Peter authority to bind and loose on earth and in heaven; commanded his disciples to make friends of "the mammon of unrighteousness;" to tease God, as an unjust judge, into compliance, with vain repetitions,—can he accept so purely the Absolute Religion? It is not possible for a long time to make serious things of trifles, without making trifles of serious things. Cannot drunkenness be justified out of the Old Testament? the very Solomon advising the poor man to drown his sorrows in wine! Jeremiah curses the man that will not fight.* Is not Sarah commended by the Fathers of the Church, and Abraham by the Sons? Men justify slavery out of the New Testament, because Paul had not his eye open to the evil, but sent back a fugitive. It is dangerous to rely on a troubled fountain for the water of life.

The influence of the Bible, past and present, rests on its profound religious significance. Its truths not only sustain themselves, but the mass of errors connected therewith;—Truth can never pass away. Men sometimes fear that the Bible will be destroyed by freedom of thought and freedom of speech. Let it perish, if such be the case. Truth cannot fear the light, nor are men so mad as to forsake a well of living water. All the free-thinking in the world could not destroy the Iliad; how much less the truths of the Bible! Things at last will pass for their true value. The truths of the Bible, which have fed and comforted the

* Proverbs, xxxvi. 6, *et seq.*; Jer. xlviii. 10.

noblest souls for so many centuries, may be trusted to last our day. The Bible has already endured the greatest abuse at the hands of its friends, who would make it an idol, and have all men do it homage. We need call none our Master but the Father of All. Yet the Bible, if wisely used, is still a blessed teacher. Spite of the superstition and folly of its worshippers, it has helped millions to that fountain where Moses and Jesus, with the holy-hearted of all time, have stooped and been filled. We see the mistakes of its writers; for though noble and of great stature, they saw not all things. We reject their follies; but their words of truth are still before us, to admonish, to encourage, and to bless. From time to time God raises up a Prophet to lead mankind. He speaks his word as it is given him; serves his generation for the time, and falls at last, when it is expedient he should give way to the next Comforter God shall send. But mankind is greater than a man, and never dies; —the experience of the past lives in the present. The light that shone at Nineveh, Egypt, Judea, Athens, Rome, shines no more from those points; it is everywhere. Can Truth decease, and a good idea once made real ever perish? Mankind, moving solemnly on its appointed road, from age to age, passes by its imperfect teachers, guided by their light, blessed by their toil, and sprinkled with their blood;—but Truth, like her God, is before and above us forever. So we pass by the lamps of the street, with wonder at their light, though but a smoky glare; they seem to change places and burn dim in the distance as we go on; at last the solid walls of darkness shut them in;—but high over our head are the unsullied stars, which never change their place, nor dim their eye. So the truths of the Scriptures will teach forever, though the record perish, and its authors be forgot. They came from God, through the soul of man;—they have exhausted neither God nor the Soul. Man is greater than the Bible. That is one ray out of the sun; one drop from the infinite ocean. The inward Christ, which alone abideth

forever, has much to say which the Bible never told, though it may imply the whole. The Bible is made for man, not man for the Bible. Its truths are old as the creation, repeated more or less purely in every tongue. Let its errors and absurdities no longer be forced on the pious mind, but perish forever; let the Word of God come through Conscience, Reason, and holy Feeling, as light through the windows of morning. Worship with no master but God, no creed but Truth, no service but Love, and we have nothing to fear.

BOOK V.

" When the Church, without temporal support, is able to do her great works upon the unforced obedience of man, it argues a divinity about her. But when she thinks to credit and better her spiritual efficacy, and to win herself respect and dread, by strutting in the false vizard of worldly authority, it is evident that God is not there, but that her apostolic virtue is departed from her, and hath left her key-cold; which she perceiving, as in a decayed nature, seeks to the outward fermentations and chafings of worldly help and external flourishes, to fetch, if it be possible, some motion into her extreme parts, or to hatch a counterfeit life with the crafty and artificial heat of jurisdiction. But it is observable, that so long as the Church, in true imitation of Christ, can be content to ride upon an ass, carrying herself and her government along in a mean and simple guise, she may be, as he is, a Lion of the tribe of Judah; and in her humility all men, with loud hosannas, will confess her greatness. But when, despising the mighty operation of the Spirit by the weak things of this world, she thinks to make herself bigger and more considerable, by using the way of civil force and jurisdiction as she sits upon this Lion, she changes into an Ass, and instead of hosannas, every man pelts her with stones and dirt." — MILTON: *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, Chap. III.

BOOK V.

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT TO THE GREATEST OF HUMAN INSTITUTIONS, OR A DISCOURSE OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

CLAIMS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE Catholic Church, and most if not all the minor Protestant Churches, claim superiority over Reason, Conscience, and the religious Sentiment in the individual soul, assuming dominion over these, as the State justly assumes authority over the excessive passions and selfishness of men. Now since the former are not, like the latter, evils in themselves, the Church, to justify itself, must denounce them either as children of the devil, or at best uncertain and dangerous guides. The churches make this claim of superiority, either *distinctly* in their creeds and formularies of faith, claiming a divine origin for themselves,—or *by implication*, in their actions, when they condemn and blast with curses such as differ from them in religious matters, and teach doctrines they disapprove. In virtue of this assumed superiority, the Christian Church, as a whole, denies what it calls "salvation" to all out of the Christian Church—excepting the Jews before Christ—though their life be divine as an angel's. How often have Socrates, and that long line of noble men who do honour to Greek and Roman antiquity, been

damned by the hirelings of the Churches! The Catholic Church denies salvation to all out of its pale, and in general each Church of the straiter and more numerous sects confirms the damnation of all who think more liberally. Men who expose to scorn the folly of their assumptions—the Bayles, the Humes, the Voltaires; men who will not accept their pretensions—the Newtons, the Lockes, the Priestleys,—have the warrant of their eternal damnation made out and sealed, not because their life was bad, but because their faith was not orthodox! Supported by this claim of superiority on the Church's part, canonized Ignorance may blast Learning; ecclesiastical Dullness condemn secular Genius; and surpliced Impiety, with shameless forehead, may damn Religion, meek and thoughtful, who out of the narrow Church walks with beautiful feet on the rugged path of mortal life, and makes real the kingdom of Heaven.

For many centuries it has been a heresy in the Christian Churches to believe that any one without their walls could expect less than damnation in the next world; it is still a heresy. It is taught with great plainness by the majority of Christian Churches, that God will damn to eternal torments the majority of his children, because they are not in the Christian Churches.* If we look into the value of this claim of superiority, we shall find the foundation on which it rests. It must be either in the idea of a Church, or in the fact of the Christian Church receiving this delegated power from a human or a divine founder.

I. OF THE IDEA OF A CHURCH.

We do not speak, except figuratively, of a Church of Moses or Mahomet. It seems to be necessary to the idea

* For the opinion of the Catholics on this point, see, *instar omnium*, Bossuet, Hist. des Variations, Liv. II. *et al.*; for that of the Protestants, see their various confessions, &c., conveniently collected in Niemeyer, Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis, Lips. 1840; Hahn, § 103 and 143; Bretschneider, *ubi supra*, Vol. II. § 204, p. 174, *et seq.* But see Hase, Hutterus Redivivus, § 88.

of a visible and historical Church, *that there should be a model-man for its central figure, around whom others are to be grouped.* He must be an example of the virtues Religion demands; an Incarnation of God, to adopt the phrase of ancient India, which has since become so prevalent among the Christians. Now Moses, viewed as a mythological character, and Mahomet, as an historical person, were not model-men, but miraculous characters whose relation to God and perfection of life each faithful soul might not share, for it was peculiar to themselves. Their character was not their own work; it was made for them by God, and therefore they could not be objects of imitation. It would be impious madness in the Mussulman or the Jew to aim at the perfections of the great prophet who stood above him.

Now there is this peculiarity of the majority of Christians, that while they affirm Jesus to be God by the divine side, they yet claim him as a *model-man* on the human side, and so call him a *God-man.** About this central figure the Christian Church is grouped. The New Testament represents him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, for all men. The Churches also assume that he is to be imitated. But they assume this in defiance of logic; for Jesus is represented as born miraculously, endowed with miraculous powers, and separated from all others by his peculiar relation to God; in short, as a God-man. Of course he must be a model only to other God-men, who are born miraculously, endowed and defended as he was;—he is no model to men born of flesh and blood, who have none but human powers. Still more, if the Christian Churches view him as the Infinite God, with all His Infinity dwelling in the flesh, it is absurd to make him a model for men. But the Churches have rarely stopped at an absurdity; they

* This term *God-man* is of Heathen origin, and involves a contradiction as much as the term *circle-triangle.* The common mistake seems to arise from taking a *figure of speech for a matter of fact,*—which leads to worse confusion in *Theology* than it would in *Geometry.*

often "call things that are not as if they were." Yet since the life of Jesus appears so entirely human in his friendships, sorrows, love, prayer, temptation, triumph and death, and since he never claims any peculiar relation to God, and the Apostles now and then represent him as the great example—the Churches could not forbear making him the model-man. Hence the homily of the Preacher; the disquisition of the Schoolmen; the glorifying treatise of the Mystic; the painting of the Artist, giving us his Triumph, Transfiguration, Farewell Meeting, and Crucifixion;—all aim to bring the GREAT EXEMPLAR distinctly before human consciousness, in the most prominent scenes of his life,—and always as a man, that the lesson of divinity might not be lost.

Now if he be this model-man, and the Churches are but an assembly of men and women grouped about him, to be instructed by his words, and warned by his example, it is not easy to see what authority they naturally have over the individual soul.

II. OF THE FACT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

If Jesus were but a wise and good man, no word of his could have authority over Reason and Conscience. At best it could repeat their oracles, and therefore he could never found an institution which should be MASTER of the Soul. But even if he were what the Churches pretend, it does not appear that he has given this authority to any on earth, if we may credit the Gospels. Christ established no organization; founded no Church, in any common sense of that term. He taught wherever men would listen; to numbers in the synagogue, temple, and fields; to a few in the little cottage at Bethany, and in the fisher's boat. He gave no instruction to his disciples to found a Church; he sent them forth to preach the glad tidings to all mankind. The Spirit within was their calling and authority; Jesus their

example; God their guide, protector and head. In all the ministrations of Jesus, there is nothing which approaches the formation of a Church; what was freely received was to be given as freely. Baptism and the Supper were accidents. He appointed no particular body of men as teachers, but sent forth his disciples, all of them, to proclaim the truth. The twelve had no authority over others; no pre-eminence in spreading the Gospel. Had they authority to bind and to loose? Let Paul answer the question. The first martyr, the most active Evangelist, and the greatest Apostle, were not of the twelve;—excepting Peter, James, and John, the rest did little that we know of. Did Christ say—as Matthew relates—that he would found a Church on Simon Peter? Paul did not fear to withstand him to the face. It must have been a sandy foundation.* Jesus appointed neither *place* nor *day* for worship. All the commands of the decalogue are reinforced in the New Testament, excepting that which enjoins the Sabbath; all the rest are natural laws. Religion with Jesus was a worship in spirit and in truth; a service at all times and in every place. He fell back on absolute Religion and Morality, demanding a divine life, purity without and piety within; but he left the When, the Where, and the How, to take care of themselves. A Church, in our sense of the term, is not so much as named in the Gospels. But Religion, above all emotions, brings men together. Uniting around this central figure, bound by the strongest of ties, their spiritual sympathies fired with admiration for the great soul of Jesus, relying on his authority, there grew up, unavoidably, a body of men and women. These the Apostles call the Church of Christ. Absolute Religion, as it descends into practice, takes a concrete form, which depends on the character and

* Matth. xvi. 18–19. See the various opinions of interpreters of this passage so improperly thrust into the mouth of Jesus, in De Wette, Exegetische Handbuch sur N. T.

condition of the men who receive it;—hence come the rites, dogmas, and ceremonies, which mark the Church of this or that age and nation.

The Christian Church, as a whole, may be defined as a *body of men and women, united by a common regard for Jesus, assembling for the purposes of worship and religious instruction.* It has the powers delegated by the individuals who compose it.*

* See the various opinions of the Catholics and Protestants on this point, collected in Winer, Comparative Darstellung der Lehrbegriffe, Leip. 1837, § 19.

CHAPTER II.

THE GRADUAL FORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

In the earliest times of Christianity, there were no regular systems of doctrine, to bind men together. The truths of natural Religion, and a somewhat indefinite belief in Jesus, were the cardinal points and essentials of Christianity. The public religious service seems perfectly free;—where the spirit of the Lord was, there was liberty; no one controlled another's freedom. The much-vaunted "form of sound words" was notoriously different with different teachers. Paul, who came late to Christianity, boasts that he received his doctrine straightway from God, not from those "who were apostles before him," whom he seems to hold in small esteem;—the decision of the council at Jerusalem did not bind him. The practical side of Christianity was developed more than the theoretical. The effect of the truth, proclaimed with freedom, was soon manifest; for the errors and superstition still clinging to the mind of the apostles could not chain the truth. Love increased; Christianity bore fruit; the Church spread wide;—it emancipated men from the yokes of the ancient sacerdotal class. The Christians were "a royal priesthood;" all were "kings and priests," appointed to offer a "spiritual sacrifice." The Apostles, who had seen Jesus, or understood his doctrine, naturally took the lead of men they sought to instruct. As the number of Christians enlarged, some organization was

needed for practical purposes. The pattern was taken from the Jewish Synagogue, which claimed no divine authority; not from the Temple, whose officers made such a claim. Hence there were elders and deacons. One of the elders was an overseer, like the "speaker" in a legislative assembly. But all these were chosen by the people, and as much of the people, after their choice as before. There was no clergy and no laity; all were sons of God, recipients of inspiration from Him. The Holy Ghost fell upon all. The wish of Moses was complied with, and God put His spirit upon each of them;—the prediction of Joel was fulfilled, and their sons and their daughters prophesied; the word of Jeremiah had come to pass, and God put his Law in their inward parts, and wrote it on their heart, and they all knew the Lord, from the least to the greatest. They were "anointed of God," and "knew all things;" they "needed not that any man should teach them." Christ and God were in all holy hearts. The overseer, or bishop, claimed no power over the people; he was only first among his peers; the greatest, only because the servant of all. Even Apollos, Cephas, Paul,—who were they but servants, through whom others believed? The bishop had no authority to bind and loose in heaven or earth; no right to enforce a doctrine. He was not the standard of faith; that was "the Mind of the Lord," which He would reveal to all who sought it. There was no monopoly of teaching on the part of the elders. A bishop, says Paul, "must be able to teach;" not the only teacher, not necessarily a teacher at all; but a minister of silence as well as speech. Inspiration was free to all men. "Quench not the Spirit;" "prove all things;" "hold fast what is good;" "covet earnestly the best gifts;" —these were the watchwords. Under Fetichism, all could consult their God, and be inspired; miracles took place continually. Under Polytheism, only a few could come to God at first hand; they alone were inspired, and miracles were rare. Under Christian Monotheism, God dwelt in all faith-

ful hearts; old covenants and priesthoods were done away, and so all were inspired.*

The New Testament was not written, and the Old Testament was but the shadow of good things to come; and since they had come, the children of the free woman were not to sit in the shadow, but to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Man, the heir of all things, long time kept under taskmasters and governors, had now come of age and taken possession of his birthright. The decision of a majority of delegates assembled in a council, bound only themselves.

Then the body of men and women worshipping in any one place was subject neither to its own officers, nor to the Church at large; nor to the Scriptures of the Old or the New Testament. No man on earth, no organization, no book, was master of the Soul;—each Church made out its canon of Scripture as well as it could. Some of our canonical writings were excluded, and apocryphal writings used in their stead. Indeed, respecting this matter of Scripture, there has never been a uniform canon among all Christians. The Bible of the Latin differs from that of the Greek Church, and contains thirteen books more; the Catholic differs from the Protestant; the early Syrians from their contemporaries; the Abyssinians from all other churches, it seems. The Ebionites would not receive the beginning of Matthew and Luke; the Marcionites had a Gospel of their own. The Socinians, and perhaps others, left off the whole of the Old Testament,† or count it unnecessary. The followers of Swedenborg do not find a spiritual sense in all

* On the state of the early Church, and the Bishops, Elders, and Deacons, which is still a matter of controversy, see Campbell, Lectures on Eccl. History, Lect. II.-XIII.; Gieseler, *ubi sup.*, § 29; Mosheim, *ubi sup.*, Book I. Art. II. chap. ii.; Neander, Allg. Geschichte der Christlichen Religion, Hamb. 1835, Vol. I. Part I. chap. ii.; Gibbon, chap. xv.; Schleiermacher, Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche, Berlin, 1840, p. 86, *et seq.* Among the modern writers Milman takes the other side; History of Christianity, Lond. 1840, Book II. chap. ii. p. 63, *et seq.*

† See Faustus Socinus, *ubi sup.*, p. 271, *et al.*

the books of the canon. Critics yearly make inroads upon the canon, striking out whole books or obnoxious passages, as not genuine. In the first ages of Christianity, the Bible was a subordinate thing; in modern times, it has been made a vehicle to carry any doctrine the expositor sees fit to interpret into it.* The first preachers of Christianity fell back on the authority of Jesus; appealed to the moral sense of mankind; applied the doctrines of Christianity to life as well as they could; and with much zeal, and some superstition and many mistakes, developed the practical side of Christianity much more than its theoretical side.

But even in the Apostles, Christianity had lost somewhat of its simplicity. It was not the perfect Religion and Morality coming from the absolute *source*, and proceeding by the absolute *method* to the absolute *end; it is taught on the authority of Christ.* The Jews must believe that he was the Messiah of the prophets;—"salvation" is connected with a belief in his person—"Neither is there salvation by any other," says Peter, in a different sense from the words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." The Jewish doctrines of "Redemption" and reconciliation by sacrifice appear more or less in the genuine works of the Apostles, and very clearly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We may explain some of the obnoxious passages as "figures of speech," referring to the "Christ born in us;" but a fair interpretation leaves it pretty certain that the writers added somewhat to the absolute Religion, though they might not share the gross doctrines often taught in their name. Christ is in some measure a mythological being, even with Paul;—he was with the Jews in the desert, and assisted at the creation. The Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection of the *body* appears undeniably; a *local heaven* and a *day* of judgment, in which Jesus is to appear in person and judge the world,

* See, on this point, some ingenious remarks of Hegel, Philosophie der Religion, Vol. I. p. 29, *et seq.*

are very clearly taught. The fourth Gospel speaks of Jesus as he never speaks of himself; the Platonic doctrine of the Logos appears therein. We may separate the apostolic doctrine into three classes, — the Judaizing, the Alexandrine, and the Pauline, each differing more or less essentially from the absolute Religion of the sermon on the mount.* Already with the Apostles Jesus has become in part deified, — his personality confounded with the Infinite God. Was it not because of the very vastness and beauty of soul that was in him? The private and peculiar doctrines of the early Christians appear in strange contrast with the gentle precepts of love to man and God, in which Jesus sums up the essentials of Religion. But, alas! what is positive and peculiar in each form of worship is of little value; the best things are the commonest, for no man can lay a new foundation, nor add to the old more than the wood, hay, and stubble of his own folly. The great excellence of Jesus was in restoring natural Religion and Morality to their true place; an excellence which even the Apostles but poorly understood.†

In their successors Christianity was a very different thing, and in the course of a few years, — alas! a very few, — it appeared, in the mass of the Churches, an idle mummery — a collection of forms and superstitious rites. Heathenism and Judaism, with all sorts of superstitious absurdities in their train, came into the Church. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem clung to the most obnoxious feature of Judaism. Christianity was the stalking-horse of ambition. A man stepped at once from the camp to the Bishop's mitre, and brought only the piety of the Roman Legion into the Church. The doctrine of many a Christian writer was less pure and beautiful than the faith of Seneca and Cicero, not

* The Epistle to the Hebrews, and the earlier Apocryphal Gospels and Epistles, are valuable monuments of the opinions of the Christians at the time they were written.

† See the impartial remarks of Schlosser respecting the origin and subsequent fate of Christianity, in his Geschichte der alten Welt, Vol. III. Pt. I. p. 249–274, Pt. II. p. 110–129, 381–416.

to name Zoroaster and Socrates. After a couple of centuries there was a distinction between Clergy and Laity. The former became "Lords over God's heritage," not "ensamples unto the flock;"—they were masters of the doctrine; could bind and loose on earth and in heaven. The majority in a council bound the minority, and the voices of the clergy determined what was "the mind of the Lord." Thus the Clergy became the Church, and were set above Reason and Conscience in the individual soul. They were chosen by themselves, and responsible to none on earth. Private inspiration was reckoned dangerous; freedom of conscience was forbidden; he who denied the popular faith was accursed. The organization of the Church was then taken from the Jewish Temple, not the Synagogue. The minister was a priest, and stood between God and the people; the Bishop, an high-priest after the order of Aaron, his kingdom of this world;—he was the "Successor of the Apostles;" the Vicegerent of Christ. Men came to the clerical office with no Christian qualification.* Baptism atoned for all sins, and was sometimes put off till the last hour, that the Christian might give full swing to the flesh, and float into heaven at last on the lustral waters of baptism. Bits of bread from the "Lord's table" were a talisman to preserve the faithful from all dangers by sea and land. Prayers were put up for the dead; the cross was worshipped; the bones of the martyrs could work miracles, cast out devils, calm a tempest, and even raise the dead. The Eucharist was forced into the mouths of children before they could say, "my father, and my mother." The sign of the cross and the "sacred oil" were powerful as Canidia's spell. In point of toleration the human race went backward for a time, far behind the Athenians and men of Rome.† The clergy assumed power over Conscience; power

* The histories of Synesius and Ambrose afford a striking picture of the clerical class in their time.

† See the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian, *passim*, for proofs of this.

to admit to Heaven, or condemn to hell; and not only decided in matters of mummery, whereof they made "divine service" to consist, but decreed what men should believe in order to obtain eternal life; an office which the sublimest of all the sons of men—modest because he was great—never took upon himself. They collected the writings of the New Testament, and decided what should be the "Standard of faith," and what not. But their canon was arbitrary, including some spurious books of small value, and rejecting others more edifying. However, they allowed some latitude in the interpretation of the works they had canonized. But next, they went farther, and developed systematically the doctrines of the Scripture, on points deemed the most important, such as the "nature of God" and Christ. Thus the "mind of the Lord" was determined and laid down, so that he might read that ran. The mysticism of Plato and the subtleties of the Stagyrite afforded matter for the pulpits and councils to discuss.

This method of deciding dark questions by plurality of votes has always been popular in Christendom. In some things the majority are always right; in some always wrong. The four hundred prophets of Baal have a "lying spirit" in them; Micaiah alone is in the right. The college of Padua, and the Sorbonne, would have voted down Galileo and Newton, a hundred to one. But what then? Majority of voices proves little in morals or mathematics: a single man in Jerusalem on a certain time had more moral and religious truth than Herod and the Sanhedrim. Synods of Dort and assemblies of Divines settle nothing but their own opinions, which will be reversed the next century, or stand, as now, a snare to the conscience of pious men.

In the early times of Christianity, the teachers in general were men of little learning, imbued with the prejudices and vain philosophies of the times; men with passions, some of them quite untamed, notwithstanding their pious zeal. In

the first century, no eminent man is reckoned among the Christians. But soon doctrines, which played a great part in the heathen worship, and which do not appear in the teaching of Jesus, were imposed upon men, on pain of damnation in two worlds;—they are not yet extinct. Rites were adopted from the same source; the scum of idolatry covered the well of living water;—the Flesh and the Devil sat down at the "Lord's Table" in the Christian Church, and with forehead unabashed, pushed away the worthy bidden guest. What passed for Christianity in many churches during the fourth and a large part of the third century was a vile superstition. The image of Christ was marred; men paid God in Cæsar's pence. The shades of great men—Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato—yes! the shades of humbler men, of name unknown to fame,—might have come up, disquieted like Samuel, from their grave, and spit upon the superstition of the Christians defiling Persia, and Athens, and Rome. It deserved the mockery it met. Christianity was basely corrupted long before it gained the Roman Palace. Had it not been corrupted, when would it have reached king's courts?—in the time of Constantine? or of Louis XIV.? The quarrels of the Bishops, the contentions of the councils, the superstition of the laymen, and the despotism and ambition of the clergy—the ascetic doctrine taught as morality, the monastic institutions with *their* plan of a divine life,—are striking signs of the times, and contrast wonderfully with that simple Nazarene and his lowly obedience to God and manly love of his brothers.

Yet here and there were men who fed with faith and works the flame of piety, which, rising from their lowly hearth, streamed up towards heaven, making the shadows of superstition and of sin look strange and monstrous as they fell on many a rood of space. These were the men who saved the Sodom of the Church. Did Christianity fail? The Christianity of Christ is not one thing, and human nature another;—it is human Virtue, human Religion, man

in his highest moments; the effect no less than the cause of human development, and can never fail till man ceases to be man. Under all this load of superstition, the heart of faith still beat. How could the world forget its old institutions, riot, and sin, in a moment? It is not thus the dull fact of the world's life yields to the divine idea of a man. The rites of the public worship, the clerical class, the stress laid on dogmas and forms,—all this was a tribute to the indolence and sensuality of mankind. The asceticism, celibacy, mortification of the body, contempt of the present life; the hatred of an innocent pleasure; the scorn of literature, science, and art,—these are the natural reaction of mankind, who had been bid to fill themselves with merely sensual delight. The lives of Mark Antony, Sallust, Crassus, of Julius Cæsar, Nero, and Domitian, explain the origin of asceticism and monastic retirement better than folios will do it. The writings of Petronius Arbiter, of Apuleius and Lucian, render necessary the works of Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, and John of Damascus. Individuals might come all at once out of Egyptian darkness into the light of absolute Religion; but the world moves slow, and oscillates from one extreme to the opposite.* For a time the leaven of Christianity seemed lost in the lump of human sin; but it was doing its great work in ways not seen by mortal eyes. The most profound of all revolutions must require centuries for its work;—the good never dies. The persecutions directed by tyrannical emperors against the new faith only helped the work;—what is written in blood, is widely read and not soon forgot. Could the "holy alliance" of Ease, Hypocrisy, and Sin, put down Christianity, which proclaimed the One God, the equality and brotherhood of all men? Did force ever prevail in the long-run against Reason or Religion? The ashes of a Polycarp and a Justin sow the

* But see how reluctantly Synesius comes to the duties of a bishop. Ep. 105, cited in Hampden, Bampton Lectures, Lond. 1837, p. 407, *et seq.*

earth for a Cadmean harvest of heroes of the soul: a man leaving wife and babes, and dying a martyr's death,—this is an eloquence the dullest can understand. If a fire is to spread in the forest, let all the winds blow upon it. Even a bad thing is not put down by abuse. However, to see the earnest of that vast result Christianity is destined to work out for the nations, we must not look at king's courts, in Byzantium or Paris; not in the chairs of bishops, noble or selfish; not at the martyr's firmness when his flesh is torn off, for the unflinching Tuscarora surpasses "the noble army of martyrs" in fortitude;—but in the common walks of life, its everyday trials; in the sweet charities of the fireside and the street; in the self-denial that shares its loaf with the distressed; the honest heart which respects others as itself. Looking deeper than the straws of the surface, we see a stream of new life is in the world, and, though choked with mud, not to be dammed up.

The history of Christianity reveals the majestic preëminence of its earthly founder. In him it is noonday light, absolute Religion; no less, no more. Come to the later times of the Apostles, the sky is overcast, and doubtful twilight begins; take another step, and the darkness deepens. Come down to Justin Martyr, it is deeper still; to Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian; to the times of the Council of Nice; read the letters of Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, the Apologies of Christianity, the fierce bickerings of strong men about matters of no moment,—we should think it the midnight of the Christian Church, did we not know that after this "woe was past," there came another woe; that there was a refuge of lies remaining where the blackness of darkness fell, and the shadow of death lingered long, and would not be lifted up.

It is not necessary to go into the painful task of tracing the obvious decline of Christianity, and its absorption in the organization of the Church, which assumed the Keys of Heaven, and bound and tortured men on earth. It is beau-

tiful to see the freedom of Paul—a man to whom the world owes so much,*—and the happy state of the earlier churches; when no one controlled another, except by Wisdom and Love; when each was his own Priest, with no middle-man to forestall inspiration, and stand between him and God; when each could come to the Father, and get truth at first-hand if he would. Christ broke every yoke; but new yokes were soon made, and in his name. He bade men pray as he did; with no mediator, nothing between them and the Father of all; making each place a temple, and each act a divine service. With the doctrines of absolute Religion on their tongue—the example of Jesus to stimulate and encourage them—the certain conviction that Truth and God were on their side; going into the world of men sick of their worn-out rituals, and hungering and thirsting after a religion they could confide in, live and die by; having stout hearts in their bosoms, which danger could not daunt, nor gold bribe, nor contempt shame, nor death appal, nor friends seduce,—no wonder the Apostles prevailed! An earnest man, even in our times, coming in the name of Religion, speaking its word of fire, and appealing to what is deepest and divinest in our heart, never lacks auditors, though a rude man like Böhme, or Bunyan, or Fox. No wonder the Apostles conquered the world;—it were a miracle if they had not put to flight "armies of the aliens," the makers of "silver shrines," and "them that sold and bought in the temple." Man moves man the world round, and Religion multiplies itself as the Banyan tree. Men with all the science of the nineteenth century, but with no religion, can scarce hold a village together; while every religious fanatic, from Mahomet to Mormon, finds followers plenty as flowers in summer, and true as steel. Can no man divine the cause?

* See Miscellaneous Writings, Art. X. p. 237, *et seq.*

Blessed was the Christian church while all were brothers. But soon as the Trojan Horse of an organized priesthood was dragged through the ruptured wall, there came out of it, stealthily, men cunning as Ulysses, cruel as Diomed, arrogant as Samuel,—exclusive and jealous, armed to the teeth in the panoply of worldliness. The little finger of the Christian priesthood was found thicker than the loins of their fathers—the flamens of Jupiter Quirinus, the Levitical priests of Jehovah. Then belief began to take the place of Life; the priest of the man; the church of home; the Flesh and the Devil, of the Word and the Holy Spirit. Divine service was mechanism, Religion priestcraft, Christianity a thing for kings to swear by, and to help priests to wealth and fame. But a seed remained that never bowed the knee to the idol. Righteous men, they are cursed by the Church, and blessed by the God of Truth. We are to blame no *class* of men,—neither the learned who were hostile to Christianity, nor the priests who assumed this power for the loaves' and fishes' sake; they were men, and did as others, with their light and temptations, would have done. Looking with human eyes, it is not possible to see how the evil could have been avoided. The wickedness long entrenched in the world; that under-current of sin which runs through the nations; the low civilization of the race; the selfishness of strong men, their awful wars; the hideous sins of slavery, polygamy; the oppression of the weak; the power of lust, brutality, and every sin,—these were obstacles that even Christianity could not sweep away in a moment, though strongest of the daughters of God. Men could sail safely for some years in the light of Jesus, though seen more and more dimly. But as the stream of time swept them farther down, and the cold shadow from mountains of hoary crime came over them anew, they felt the darkness. Let us judge these men lightly. Low as the Church was in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, it yet represented the best interests of mankind as no other institution. Individuals but

not societies rose above it, and soared away to the Heaven of peace, amid its cry of excommunication. Let us give the Church its due.

Now as no institution exists and claims the unforced homage of men unless it have some real permanent excellence, in virtue of which alone it holds its place, being hindered, not helped by the accidental error, falsity, and sin connected therewith; and since the Church has always stood, in spite of its faults, and filled such a place in human affairs as no other institution,—it becomes us to look for the Idea it represents, knowing there must be a great truth to stand so long, extend so wide, and uphold so much that is false.

CHAPTER III.

THE FUNDAMENTAL AND DISTINCTIVE IDEA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH — DIVISION OF THE CHRISTIAN SECTS.

ALL religions have this common point,—*an acknowledged sense of dependence on God;* and each religion has some special peculiarity of its own, which distinguishes it from all others. Now the essential peculiarity of Christianity is indeed its absolute character; but the formal and theoretic peculiarity, which contradistinguishes it from all other religions, is this doctrine,—*that God has made the highest revelation of himself to man through Jesus of Nazareth.* This doctrine—which does not proceed from the absolute character, but from the historical origin of Christianity—is the common ground on which all Christian sects, the Catholic and the Quaker, the Anabaptist, the Rationalist, and the Mormonite, are agreed. But as this is logically affirmed by all *theoretical Christians,* it is as logically denied by all *not-theoretical Christians.* Thus the Jews and Mahometans think their prophets superior to Jesus. When we find a man who is a higher "incarnation of God;" one who teaches and lives out more of Religion and morality than Jesus,—we are bound to admit that fact, and then *cease to be theoretical Christians.* Men may now be *essential and practical* Christians, if they regard Christianity as the absolute Religion, and live it out,—or live the absolute Re-

ligion, and give it no name, though not *theoretical* Christians.

This distinctive doctrine of Christianity appears in various forms in the different sects. Thus some call Jesus the *Infinite God;* others, the *first of created beings;* others, a miraculous being of a mixed nature, and hence a *God-man,* the *identity of man and God;* others still, a mortal man, the *most perfect representation of Goodness and Religion.* These may all be regarded, excepting the last, as more or less mythological statements of this distinctive doctrine.

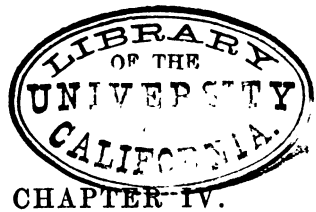
Now if Christianity as the absolute Religion, with this theoretical peculiarity, be developed in a man, it has an influence on all his active powers. It affects the mind, he makes a Theology; the Conscience, he lives a divine life; the Imagination, he devises a symbol, rite, penance, or ceremony. The Theology, the Life, and the Symbol, must depend on the natural endowments and artificial culture of the individual Christian; and as both gifts and the development thereof differ in different men, it is plain that various sects must naturally be formed, each of which, setting out from the first principle common to all religions, and embracing the great theoretical doctrine of Christianity — which distinguishes it from all not-Christian religions — has, besides, a certain peculiar doctrine of its own which separates it from all other Christian sects. These sects are the necessary forms Religion takes in connection with the varying condition of men. The Christian Church, as a whole, is made up of these parties, all of whom, taken together, with their Theologies, Life, and Symbols, represent the amount of absolute Religion which has been developed in Christendom, in the speculative, practical, or æsthetic way. To understand the Christian Church, therefore, we must understand each of its parties, their truth and error, their virtue and vice, and then form an appreciation of the whole matter.

In making the estimate, however, we may neglect such

portions of the Christian Church as have had no influence on the present development of Christianity amongst us. Thus we need not consider the Greek and Oriental Churches after the sixth century, as their influence upon Christianity ceased to be considerable, in consequence of the superior practical talents of the Western Churches. The remaining portions may be classified in various ways; but, for the present purpose, the following seems the best arrangement, namely,—

I. THE CATHOLIC PARTY.
II. THE PROTESTANT PARTY.
III. THOSE NEITHER CATHOLICS NOR PROTESTANTS.

These three will be treated each in its turn.



CHAPTER IV.

THE CATHOLIC PARTY.

THE Catholic Church is the oldest, and in numbers still the most powerful of all Christian organizations. It grew as the Christian spirit extended among the ruins of the old world, by the might of the truth borne in its bosom, overpowering the old worship, the artifice of priests, the selfishness of the affluent, the might of the strong, the cherished forms of a thousand years, the impotent armies of purple kings. It arose from small beginnings. No one knows who first brought Christianity to Rome; nor who planted the seed of that hierarchic power which soon became a tree, and at length a whole forest, stretching to the world's end, infolding chapels for the pious, and dens for robbers. The practical spirit of old Rome came into the Church. Its power grew as Christian freedom declined. The mantle of that giant genius which made the seven-hilled city conquerer of the world; the belt of power which girt the loins of her mighty men—Fabius, Regulus, Cicero, Cæsar—passed to the Christian Bishops, as that genius fled from the earth, howling over his crumbled work. The spirit of those ancient heroes came into the church—their practical skill, their obstinate endurance, their power of speech with words like battles, their lust of power, their resolution which nothing could overturn or satisfy. The Greek Christians were philosophic, literary;—they could sling stones at a hair's-breath. In the early times they had

all the advantage of position; "the chairs of the Apostles;" the Christian Scriptures written in their tongue. Theirs were the great names of the first centuries,—Polycarp, Justin, the Clements, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, the Gregories, Chrysostom. But the Latin Church had the practical skill, the soul to dare, and the arm to execute. The power of the Roman church therefore advanced step by step. Its chiefs were dexterous men, with the coolness of Cæsar, and the zeal of Hannibal. Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, would have been powerful men anywhere—in the court of Sardanapalus, or in a college of Jesuits. They brought the world into the Church;—it was the world's gain, but the Church's loss. The Emperor soon learned to stoop his conquering eagles to the spiritual power which shook the capitol. The Church held divided sway with him;—the spiritual sceptre was wrested from his hands. Constantine fled to Byzantium as much to escape the Latin clergy as to defend himself from the warriors of the North.*

Now the Catholic Church held to the first truths of Religion and of Christianity, as before shown. Its peculiar and distinctive doctrine was this,—that *God still acts upon and inspires mankind*, being in some measure immanent therein. This doctrine is broad enough to cover the world, powerful enough to annihilate the arrogance of any Church. But the Roman party limited this doctrine by adding, that God did not act by a natural law, directly on the mind, heart, and soul of each man who sought faithfully to approach Him, but acted miraculously, *through the organization of the Church, on its members and no others;* and on them, not because they were men, but instruments of the church; not in proportion to a man's gifts or the use of his gifts, but as he stood high or low in the church. The

* See the external causes of the superiority of the Roman Church, in Rehm, Geschichte des Mittelalters, Vol. I. p. 516, *et seq.*

humblest Priest had a little inspiration, enough to work the greatest of miracles; the Bishop had more; the Pope, as head of the Church, must be infallibly inspired, so that he could neither act wrong, think wrong, nor feel wrong.

Christianity, as the Absolute Religion and Morality, necessarily sets out from the absolute source—the spirit of God in the soul, revealing truth. The Catholic Church, on the contrary, starts from a finite source, the limited work of inspired men,—namely, the *traditional word* preserved in Scripture, and the unscriptural tradition, both written and not written. But then, laying down this indisputable truth, that a book must be interpreted by the same spirit in which it is written, and therefore that a book written by miraculous and superhuman inspiration can be understood only by men inspired in a similar way, and limiting the requisite inspiration to itself, it assumed the office of sole interpreter of the Scriptures; refused the Bible to the laymen, because they, as uninspired, could not understand it; and gave them only its own interpretation. Thus it attempted to mediate between mankind and the Bible.

Then again, relying on the unscriptural tradition preserved in the Fathers, the Councils, the organization and memory of the Church, it makes this of the same authority as the Scriptures themselves, and so claims divine sanction for doctrines which are neither countenanced by "human Reason," nor "divine Revelation" as contained in the Bible. This is a point of great importance, as will presently appear.

Now the Catholic Church was logically consistent with itself in both these pretensions. Each individual church, at first, received what Scripture it saw fit, and interpreted the Word as well as it could. Next, the Synods decreed for the mass of churches, both the canon of Scripture and the doctrine it contained. The Catholic Church continued to exercise these privileges. Then again, taking the common notion, the Church had a logical and speculative basis for its claim to inspiration, though certainly none in point

of fact. If God inspired Jesus to create a new religion—Peter, Paul, and John to preach it, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke to record the words and works of Christ and other Christians,—when did the inspiration cease? With the Apostles or their sucessors?—the direct or the remote? Did it cease at all? It did not appear. Besides, how could the inspired works be interpreted except by men continually inspired? how could the Church, founded and built by miraculous action, be preserved by the ordinary use of man's powers? Were Jude and James inspired, and Clement and Ambrose left with no open vision? Such a conclusion could not come from a comparison of their works. Did not Jesus promise to be with his Church to the end of the world? Here was the warrant for the assumptions of the Catholic party. So it, with logical consistency, claimed a perpetual, miraculous, and exclusive inspiration, on just as good ground as it allowed the claim of earlier men to the same inspiration; it made tradition the master over the soul, on just the same pretension that the Bible is made the only certain rule of faith and practice. As the only interpreter of Scripture, the exclusive keeper of tradition, as the vicar of God, and alone inspired by Him, it stood between man on the one side, and the Bible, Antiquity, and God, on the other side. The Church was sacred, for *God was immanent therein;* the world profane, deserted of Deity.

The Church admits three sources of moral and religious truth, namely,—

1. *The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and Apocrypha.* It declares that these are good and wise, but ambiguous and obscure, and by themselves alone incomplete, not containing the whole of the doctrine, and requiring an inspired expositor to set forth their contents.

2. *The unscriptural Tradition, oral and written.* This is needed to supply what is left wanting through the imperfection of Scripture, and to teach the more recondite doctrines of Christianity, such as the Trinity, Redemption, the

Authority of the Church, Purgatory, Intercession, the use of Confession, Penance, and the like; and also to explain the Scriptures themselves. But Tradition also is imperfect, ambiguous, full of apparent contradictions, and impossible for the laity to understand, except through the inspired class, who alone could reconcile its several parts.

3. *The direct Inspiration of God, acting on the official members of the Church;* that is, on its councils, priests, and above all, on its infallible head.

The Church restricted direct inspiration to itself; and even within the Church the action of God was limited,—for if an individual of the clerical order taught what was hostile to the doctrine of the Church, or not contained therein, his inspiration was referred to the Devil, not God, and the man burned, not canonized. Thus inspiration was subjected to a very severe process of verification, even within the Church itself;—it forbade mankind to trust Reason, Conscience, and the religious Sentiment; to approach God through these, and get truth at first-hand, as Moses, Jesus, and the other great men of antiquity had done. For this the laymen must depend on the clergy, and the clergyman must depend on the whole Church, represented by the Fathers or Councils, and idealized in its head. Thus the Church was the judge of the doctrine and the practice; invested with the Keys of Heaven and Hell; with power to bind and loose, remit sins, or retain them, and authority to demand absolute submission from the world, or punish with fagots and hell, men who would not believe as the church commanded. In this way it would control private inspiration. But not to leave the heretics hopeless, or drive them to violence, it assumes the right to restore them, and to pardon their sins, on condition of submission and penance. The Saviour, the Martyrs, the Saints, had not only expiated their own sins, but performed works of supererogation, and so established a sinking-fund to liquidate the sins of the world. This deposit was at the disposal of the Church, who

could therewith—aided by the intercession of the beatified spirits—purchase the salvation of a penitent heretic, though his sins were as crimson.

The Church assumed mastery over all souls. The individual was nothing; the Church was all. Its power stood on a moral basis; its authority was derived from God. The humblest priest, in celebrating the mass, performed a miracle greater than all the wonders of Jesus; for he only changed water into wine, and fed five thousand men with five loaves; but the priest, by a single word, changed bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Almighty God. It styles itself God's vicegerent on earth; and as Christ was a temporary and partial incarnation of the Deity, so itself is a perfect and eternal incarnation thereof. Thus the Church became a Theocracy. It was far more consistent than the Jewish Theocracy, for that allowed private inspiration, and therefore was perpetually troubled by the race of prophets, who never allowed the priests their own way, but cried out with most rousing indignation against the Levites and their followers, and refused to be put down. Besides, the Jewish Theocracy limited infallibility to God and the Law, which was to be made known to all, and though inspired, could be easily understood by the simple son of Israel. It never claimed that for the Priesthood.

Now there are but two scales in the balance of power,—the Individual who is ruled, and the Institution that governs, here represented by the Church. Just as the one scale rises, the other falls. The spiritual freedom of the individual in the Church is contained in an angle too small to be measurable. Did men revolt from this iron rule? There was the alternative of eternal damnation, for all men were born depraved, exposed to the wrath of God; their only chance of avoiding hell was to escape through the doors of the Church. Thus men were morally compelled to submit for the sake of its "redemption." Did they throw themselves on the mercy of the Holy Ghost, penitent for

their disobedience of the Church?—they were told that mercy was at the Church's disposal. Did they make the appeal to Scripture, and say, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive;" that he had expiated all their sins?—the Church told them their exegesis of the passage was wrong, for Christ only expiated their *inherited* sins, not the *actual* sin they had committed, and for which they must smart in hell, atone for in purgatory, or get pardoned by submitting to the vicar of God, and going through the rites, forms, fasts, and penances he should prescribe, and thus purchase a share of the redemption which Christ and the saints, by their works of supererogation, had provided to meet the case. This doctrine was taught in good faith, and in good faith received.*

I. THE MERITS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

As we look back upon the history of the Church, and see the striking unity of that institution, we naturally suppose its chiefs had a regular plan: but such was not the fact. The peculiar merit of the Catholic church consists in its assertion of the truth, that *God still inspires mankind as much as ever;* that He has not exhausted himself in the creation of a Moses or a Jesus, the Law or the Gospel, but is present and active in spirit as in space. Admitting this truth, so deep, so vital to the race—a truth preserved in the religions of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and above all in the Jewish faith—clothing itself with all the authority of ancient days; the word of God in its hands, both tradition and Scripture; believing it had God's infallible and exclusive inspiration at its heart—for such no doubt was the

* See, who will, Rehm, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. p. 541, *et seq.*, and Vol. III. p. 1, *et seq.*, for the political aspect of the Roman Church; Guizot, Histoire de la Civilization, &c. Leçon II.–VI., X.–XII.; Hallam, State of Europe during the Middle Ages, ch. vii.; Gibbon, *ubi sup.*, ch. xv. xvi. xviii. xxi.; Comte, *ubi sup.*, Vol. V. Leçon LIV. LV., who, in some respects, surpasses all his predecessors.

real belief—and actually, through its Christian character, combining in itself the best interests of mankind,—no wonder it prevailed. Its countenance became as lightning;—it stood and measured the earth;—it drove asunder the nations;—it went forth in the mingling tides of civilized corruption and barbarian ferocity, for the salvation of the people,—conquering and to conquer; its brightness as the light.

It separated the spiritual from the temporal power, which had been more or less united in the theocracies of India, Egypt, and Judea, and which can only be united to the lasting detriment of mankind. This was a great merit in the Church—one that cannot be appreciated in our days, for we have not felt the evil it aimed to cure. The Church, in theory, stood on a basis purely moral; it rose in spite of the State—in the midst of its persecutions. At first it shunned all temporal affairs, and never allowed a temporal power to be superior to itself. The department of *political* action belonged to the State; that of *intellectual* action—the stablest and strongest of power—to the Church;—hence its care of education; hence the influence it exerted on literature. We read the letters of Ambrose and Augustine, and find a spirit all unknown to former times.* Tertullian could oppose the whole might of the State with his pen;—that fierce African did not hesitate to expose the crimes of the nation. The Apologetists assume a tone of spiritual authority surprising in that age.

The Church set apart a speculative class, distinct from all others, including the most cultivated men of their times. It provided a special education for this class, one most admirably adapted, in many points, for the work they were to do. Piety and genius found here an asylum, a school, and a broad arena. Thus it had a troop of superior minds, edu-

* See this point ably though briefly treated in Schlosser, *ubi sup.*, Vol. III. Part III. p. 102–151, and IV. p. 25–75. See also Part II. p. 167, *et seq.*

cated and pious men, who could not absorb the political power, as the sacerdotal class of India, Egypt, and Judea, had done; who could not be indifferent to the social and moral state of mankind, as the priesthood had been in Greece and Rome. Theoretically, they were free from the despotism of the one and the indifference of the other. The public virtue was their peculiar charge.

Rome was the city of organizations and practical rules; nowhere was the individual so thoroughly subordinated to the State. War, Science, and Lust, of old time had here incarnated themselves. The same practical spirit organized the Church, with its Dictator, its Senate, and its Legions. The discipline of the clerical class, their union, zeal, and commanding skill, gave them the solidity of the Phalanx and the celerity of the Legion. The Church prevailed as much by its organization as its doctrine. What could a band of loose-girt apostles, each warring on his own account, avail against the refuge of Lies, where Strength and Sin had intrenched themselves, and sworn never to yield? An organized Church was demanded by the necessities of the time; an association of soldiers called for an army of saints.* A sensual people required forms,—the Church gave them;—superstitious rites, divination, processions, images,—the Church—obdurate as steel when occasion demands, but pliant as molten metal when yielding is required,—the Church allows all this. Its form grew out of the wants of the time and place.

Was there no danger that the priesthood, thus able and thus organized, should become ambitious of wealth and power? The greatest danger, that fathers should seek to perpetuate authority for their children. But this class of men, cut off from posterity by the prohibition of marriage, lived in the midst of ancient and feudal institutions, where all depended on birth; where descent from a successful

* See Guizot and Comte.

pirate, or some desperate freebooter, hard-handed and hard-hearted, who harried village after village, secured a man elevation, political power and wealth; the clergy were cut off from the most powerful of all inducements to accumulate authority. In that long period from Alaric to Columbus, when the Church had ample revenues; the most able and cultivated men in her ranks, so thoroughly disciplined; the awful power over the souls of men, far more formidable than bayonets skilfully plied; with an acknowledged claim to miraculous inspiration and divine authority,—had it not been for the celibacy of the Christian priesthood—damnable institution, and pregnant with mischief as it was—we should have had a sacerdotal caste, the Levites of Christianity, whose little finger would have been thicker than the loins of all former Levites; who would have flayed men with scorpions, where the priestly despots of Egypt and India only touched them with a feather; and the dawn of a better day must have been deferred for thousands of years. The world is managed wiser than some men fancy. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remnant of wrath He will restrain," said an old writer. The remedy of inveterate evils is attended with sore pangs. These wretched priests of the middle ages bore a burthen and did a service for us which we are slow to confess.

The Church, reacting against the sensuality and excessive publicity of the heathen world, in its establishment of Convents and Monasteries opened asylums for delicate spirits that could not bear the rage of savage life; afforded an hospital for men sick of the fever of the world, worn out and shattered in the storms of state, who craved a little rest for charity's sweet sake, before they went where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Among the sensual, the Saint is always an Anchorite;—Religion gets as far as possible from the world.* Rude men

* To illustrate this point, see, *inter omnium*, the works of St. Bernard.

require obvious forms and sensible shocks to their roughness. The very place where the Monks prayed and the Nuns sang, was sacred from the ruthless robber. As he drew near it, the tiger was tamed within him; the mailed warrior kissed the ground, and Religion awoke for the moment in his heart. The fear of hell, and reverence for the consecrated spot, chained up the devil for the time.

Then the Church had a most diffusive spirit; it would Christianize as fast as the State would conquer; its missionaries are found in the courts of barbarian monarchs, in the caves and dens of the savage, diffusing their doctrine and singing their hymns. Creating an organization the most perfect the world ever saw; with a policy wiser than any monarch ever dreamed of, and which grew more perfect with the silent accretions of time; with address to allure the ambitious to its high places, and so turn all their energy into its deep, wide channel; with mysteries to charm the philosophic, and fill the fancy of the rude; with practical doctrines for earnest workers, and subtle questions, always skilfully left open, for men of acute discernment; with rites and ceremonies that addressed every sense, rousing the mind like a Grecian drama, and promising a participation with God through the sacrament; with wisdom enough to bring men really filled with Religion into its ranks; with good sense and good taste to employ all the talent of the times in the music, the statues, the painting, the architecture of the church, thus consecrating all the powers of man to man's noblest work; with so much of Christian truth as the world in its wickedness could not forget;—no wonder that the Church spread wide her influence; sat like a queen among the nations,—saying to one, Go, and it went—to another, Come, and it came.

Then again, its character, in theory, was kindly and humane. It softened the asperity of secular wars; forbade them in its sacred seasons; established its Truce of God, and gave a chance for rage to abate. It espoused the cause

of the people. Coming in the name of one "despised and rejected of men," "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" of a man born in an ox's crib, at his best estate not having where to lay his head; who died at the hangman's hand, but who was at last seated at the right hand of God, and in his low estate was deemed God in humiliation come down into the flesh, to take its humblest form, and show he was no respecter of persons,—the Church did not fail to espouse the cause of the people, with whom Christianity found its first adherents, its apostles and defenders. With somewhat, in its worst days, of the spirit of him who gave his life a ransom for many—with much of it really active in its best days and its theory at all times,—the Church stood up, for long ages, the only bulwark of freedom; the last hope of man struggling but sinking as the whelming waters of barbarism whirled him round and round. It came to the Baron, haughty of soul, and bloody of hand, who sat in his cliff-tower, as a hungry raven; who broke the poor into fragments, ground them to powder, and spurned them like dust from his foot; it came between him and the captive, the serf, the slave, the defenceless maiden, and stayed the insatiate hand. Its curse blasted as lightning. Even in feudal times, it knew no distinction of birth: all were "conceived in sin," "shapen in iniquity;" alike the peasant and the peer. The distinction of birth, station, was apparent, not real. Yet were all alike children of God, who judged the heart, and knew no man's person; all heirs of Heaven, for whom prophets and apostles had uplifted their voice; yes, for whom GOD had worn this weary, wasting weed of flesh, and died a culprit's death. Then while nothing but the accident of distinguished birth, or the possession of animal fierceness, could save a man from the collar of the thrall, the Church took to her bosom all who gave signs of talent and piety; sheltered them in her monasteries, ordained them as her priests, welcomed them to the chair of St. Peter; and men who from birth would have

been companions of the Galilean fishermen, sat on the spiritual throne of the world, and governed with a majesty which Cæsar might envy, but could not equal. Priests came up from no Levitical stock, but the children of captives and bondmen, as well as of prince and peer. When northern barbarism swept over the ancient world—when temple and tower went to the ground, and the culture of old time, its letters, science, arts, were borne off before the flood,—the Church stood up against the tide; shed oil on its wildest waves; cast the seed of truth on its waters, and as they gradually fell, saw the germ send up its shoot, which growing while men watch and while they sleep, after many days bears its hundred-fold—a civilization better than the past, and institutions more beneficent and beautiful.

The influence of the Church is perhaps greater than even its friends maintain. It laid its hand on the poor and down-trodden; they were raised, fed, and comforted. It rejected, with loathing, from its coffers, wealth got by extortion and crime. It touched the shackles of the slave, and the serf arose disenthralled, the brother of the peer. It annihilated slavery, which Protestant cupidity would keep forever.* It touched the diadem of a wicked king, and it became a crown of thorns; the monarch's sceptre was a broken reed before the crosier of the Church.† Its rod, like the wand of Moses, swallowed up all hostile rods. Like God himself, the Church gave, and took away, rendering no reason to man for its gifts or extortions. It sent mis-

* See, in Comte, *ubi sup.*, Vol. V. p. 407, *et seq.*, some Reflections on the milder Character of Slavery in *Catholic* America, compared with Slavery in *Protestant* America; and yet Comte is hardly a Theist. For the influence of Christianity on Slavery, see the accounts of Paulinus, Deogratias, Patiens, and Synesius, in Schlosser, Vol. III. Part III. p. 284, *et seq.* Gibbon, in his heartless way, passes over with scarce a notice the beautiful spirit Christianity brought into Rome, and its influence on the condition of slaves. Hallam, in his one-sided appreciation of the Catholic Church, has done no more justice to its merits.

† See an early instance of the collision between the spiritual and temporal power, in the case of Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, and the Queen Justina, in Fleury, *ubi sup.*, Liv. XVIII. chap. 32, *et seq.*; and also in Gibbon, chap. xxvii.

sionaries to the east and the west, and carried the waters of baptism from the fountains of Nubia to the roaring Geysers of a Northern isle. It limited the power of kings; gave religious education to the people, which no ancient institution ever aimed to impart; kept on its sacred hearth the smouldering embers of Greek or Roman thought; cherished the last faint sparkles of that fire Prometheus brought from Gods more ancient than Jove. It had ceremonies for the sensual; confessionals for the pious—needed and beautiful in their time; labours of love for the true-hearted; pictures and images to rouse devotion in the man of taste; churches whose aspiring turrets and sombre vaults filled the kneeling crowd with awe; it had doctrines for the wise, rebukes for the wicked, prayers for the reverent, hopes for the holy, and blessings for the true. It sanctified the babe newly born and welcome; watched over marriage with a jealous eye; fostered good morals; helped men, even by its symbols, to partake the divine nature; smoothed the pillow of disease and death, giving the Soul wings, as it were, to welcome the death-angel, and gently, calmly pass away. It assured masculine piety of its reward in Heaven; told the weak and wavering that the Divine Being would help him if faithful. In the honours of canonization it promised the most lasting fame on earth;—generations to come should call the good man a blessed saint, and his name never perish while the years went round. Heroism of the Soul took the place of boldness in the Flesh. It did not, like Polytheism, deify warriors and statesmen—Attila, Theodosius, Clovis—their kingdom was of this world; but it canonized martyrs and saints—Polycarp, Justin, Ambrose, Paulinus, Bernard of Clairvaux.* Such were some of the excellences, theoretical or practical, of the Church. This hasty sketch does not allow more particular notice of them.

* Canonization among the Catholics seems to come from the same root with the Apotheosis of the Polytheists. Both, no doubt, exerted an influence on men who asked a recompense for being good and religious.

II. THE DEFECTS AND VICES OF THE CATHOLIC PARTY.

But the Church had vices, vast and awful to the thought. As its distinctive excellence was to proclaim the continuance of inspiration, so its sacramental sin was in *limiting this inspiration to itself*,—thus setting bounds to the Spirit of God and the Soul of man. Who shall say to the Infinite God—"Hitherto shalt Thou come, but no farther: Thou hast inspired Moses and Jesus, the Apostles and the Church: Well done! now rest from Thy work, and speak no more, except as we prescribe"? The Church did say it. The wondrous mechanism of the Church, and much of its power, came from this false assumption, that it alone had the Word of God. So its organization was based on a lie, and required new lies to uphold, and prophets of lies to defend it. Its servants, the priests, became proud of spirit. The only keepers of Scripture and Tradition—the only recipients of Inspiration, they forbade Free Inquiry as of no use; stifled Conscience as only leading men into trouble; and excommunicated Common Sense, who asked "terrible questions," calling for the title-deeds of the Church. They went farther, and forbade the bans between Reason and Religion; and when the parties insisted on the union, turned them both out of doors with a curse. The laity must not approach God as the clergy; must only commune with Him "in one kind." The Church forgot that God grants inspiration to no one except on condition that he conforms to the divine law, living pure and true, and grants it only in proportion to his gifts and his use thereof; so, relying on the *office* and "apostolical succession" for inspiration, the priests lived shameless and wicked lives, rivaling Sardanapalus and Domitian in their cruelty and sin. They forgot that God withholds inspiration from none that is faithful; so they stoned the prophets who rebuked their lies and published their sin; they shamefully entreated men whom God

sent of his errands to these unworthy husbandmen. They became spiritual tyrants, forcing all men to utter the same creed, submit to the same rite, reverence the same symbol, and be holy in the same way.

In its zeal to separate the spiritual power from temporal hands, it took what was not its own—power over men's bodies; and made laws for the State.* In its haste to give preëminence to spiritual things, it made its offices a bribe, greater than the State could give. The honour of sainthood, —what was the fame of king and conqueror to that? It promised the honours of high clerical office, and even of canonization, to the most mercenary and cruel of men, whose touch was pollution;—its list of saints is full of knaves and despots. The State was taken into the Church,—a refractory member. The Flesh and the Devil were baptized; "took holy orders;" governed the Church in some cases, but were still the Flesh and the Devil, though called by a Christian name. That divine man, whose name is ploughed into the world, said, "If a man smite thee on one cheek, turn the other;" but if a man lifted his hand or his voice against the Church, it blasted him with damnation and hell. Christ said his kingdom was not of this world: so said the Church at first, and Christians refused to war, to testify in the courts, to appear in the theatres, and foul their hands with the world's sin. But as soon as there was an organized priesthood,—to defend themselves from the tyranny of the State, and to exercise authority over the souls of men, power on the earth became needed. One lie leads to many. What the Church first took in self-defence, it afterwards clung to and increased, and was so taken up with its earthly kingdom that it quite forgot its patrimony in Heaven; so it played a double game, attempting to serve God, and keep on good terms with the Devil. But it was once said, "no man *can* serve two masters:" unna-

1 See Hallam, *ubi supra*, ch. vii., ed. Paris, Vol. I. p. 373, *et seq.*

tural, spiritual power could not be held without temporal authority to sustain it; so the Church took fleshly weapons for its carnal ends: Monks raised armies; Bishops led them; God was blasphemed by prayers to aid bloodshed. The Church sold her garment to buy a sword.

The Church was the exclusive vicar of God; she must have "the tonnage and poundage of all free-spoken truth.' To accomplish this end, and establish her dogmas, she slew men, beginning with Priscillian and "the six Gnostics," in the fourth century, at Triers, and ending no one knows where, or when, or with whom.* It had such zeal for the "unity of the faith," that it put prophets in chains; asked the sons of God if they were "greater than Jacob." It made Belief take the place of Life. It absolved men from their sins, past, present, and future; emancipated the clergy from the secular law, thus giving them license to sin. It sold heaven to extortioners for a little gold, and built St. Peter's with the spoil. It wrung ill-gotten gains out of tyrants on their deathbed; devoured the houses of widows and the weak; built its cathedrals out of the spoil of orphans, thus literally giving a stone when bread was asked for, as St. Bernard honestly called it. It was greedy of gold and power, and at one time had well-nigh half the lands of England held in mortmain. It absolved men from oaths, broke marriages, told lies, forged charters and decretals, burned the philosophers, corrupted the classics, altered the Fathers, changed the decisions of the councils, and filled Europe with its falsehood.† It has fought the most hideous

* See the story in Sulpitius Severus, Hist. Sac. Lib. II. ch. 50–51; Fleury, *ubi sup.*, Liv. XVII. ch. 56, 57; and XVIII. ch. 29, 30. The Pope, St. Leo, commended the action, but Gregory of Tours, and Ambrose of Milan, condemned it. Idacius and Ithacius, the two bishops who caused the execution, were expelled from their office by the popular indignation.

† See instances of this forgery in Hallam, *ubi sup.*, ch. vii. p. 391, *et seq.*, *et al.*; Daillé, On the right Use of the Fathers, &c., London, 1841, *passim*; Middleton, *ubi supra*. But see, on the side of the Church, Bossuet, Defense de la Tradition et des Saints Pères; and Manzoni, Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica, Firenze, 1835.

of wars; evangelized nations with the sword; laid kingdoms under interdict, to gratify its pride.

The Church boasts of its uniform doctrine,—but it changes every age; of its peaceful spirit,—but who fought the crusades, the wars of extermination in Switzerland, France, the Low Countries?—to whom must we set down the ecclesiastical butchery that filled Europe with funeral piles? It quarreled with the temporal power, and built up institutions of tyranny to suppress truth; kept the Bible to itself; made the Greek Testament a prohibited book; brought dead men's bones into the churches, for the living to worship, and worked lying wonders to confirm false doctrine. It loved the night of the dark ages, and clung to its old dogmas.

The Church came at length to be a colossus of crime, with a thin veil of hypocrisy drawn over its face, and over that only. The vow of purity its children took, became a license for sin;—the corruptest of courts was the court of the Pope. What reverence had the Archbishops for the doctrine of the church? Cardinal Bembo bids Sadolet not read St. Paul; it would *spoil his taste*. In the early ages, the Apostles were the devoutest of men; in later days, their "successors" were steeped to the lips in crime.*

For centuries, the Church, like the Berserkers of northern romance, seemed to possess the soul and strength of each antagonist it slew. But its hour struck;—the work it required ten centuries to mature, stood in its glory not one. Each transient institution has a truth, or it would not be—an error, or it would stand forever. The truth opens men's eyes; they see the error, and would reject it. Then comes the perpetual quarrel between the Old and the

* See Hallam, *ubi supra*, ch. vii. De Potter loves to dwell on the faults of the Church, for which there is sufficient opportunity: Neander, as much too lenient, errs on the other side. Much information in a popular form may be found in M. Roux-Ferrand, Histoire des Progrès de la Civilization en Europe, 6 vols. 8vo., Paris, 1833-1841, Vol. I.-II., Leçons, X.-XII.; Vol. III. ch. iv.-vi.; Vol. IV. ch. v.-vii., *et al.*

New. "Every battle of the warrior," says an ancient prophet, "is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." But the battle of the Church was a devouring flame.

In the time of Boniface VIII., or about the beginning of the fourteenth century, an eye that read the signs of the times, and saw the cloud and the star below the horizon, could have foretold the downfall of the Church. Its brightest hour was in the day of Innocent III. A wise Providence governs the affairs of men, and never suffers the leaf to fall till the swelling bud crowds it off. Out of the ashes of the old institution there springs up a new being, soon as the world can give it place. No institution is normal and ultimate; it has but its day, and never lasts too long nor dies too soon. Judaism and Heathenism nursed and swaddled mankind for Christianity, which came in the fulness of time. The Catholic Church rocked the cradle of mankind;—in due season, like a jealous nurse, assiduous and meddlesome, but grown ill-tempered with age and disgust of new things, she yields up with reluctance her rebellious charge, whose vagaries her frowns and stripes will not restrain; whose struggling weight her withered arms are impotent to bear; whose aspiring soul her anicular and maudlin wit cannot understand. Her promise will not coax, nor her baubles bribe, nor her curses affright him more;—the stripling child will walk alone.

The Protestant "Reformation" came from the action of Ideas which had not had justice done them in the Catholic Church, just as the Christian Reformation from Ideas not sufficiently represented in Judaism and Heathenism. It did not, more than the other, come all at once; there was "Lutheranism" before Luther, as Christianity before Christ. Slowly the ages prepared for both, for each was a point in the development of man. The Church educated men to see her faults; gave them weapons to attack her. The Reformation was long a-gathering in the bosom of the Church

itself;*—Athanasius had his Arius to contend with. There was always some Paul of Samosata, some Theodore of Mopsuestia, some Peter of Bruis, or some Henry of Lausanne, to trouble the Church. In the twelfth century it took all the miracles of Clairvaux, and the leanness of its Abbot, to put down the heretics,—who would come up again. Was there not Waldo in France, Arnold of Brescia in the papal state, John Huss at Constance, and Wicliff in England,—and all of them at no great distance of time? Faustus and Gutenberg did more for the Reformation than the Diet at Worms. Luther, and Zwingle, and Calvin, and the host of great men who grew in their shadow, were only the heralds that blew the trumpet of the Reformation; its prize-fighters, not directors of the movement. It was the God of nations that moved the world's heart;—the Spirit only culminated in Luther and his friends. It burned in holy hearts in Bohemia and Languedoc, and the valleys of the Pyrenees, and the mountains of Tyrol; it breathed in lofty minds at Paris, Saxony, Padua, London, Rome itself. Every learned Greek the Turks frightened from Constantinople, or Italian wealth lured to the queen of cities; every manuscript of the Classics, the Fathers, the Councils, the Scriptures, which found deliverance from the moles and the bats; every improvement in law, science, and art; every discovery in Alchemy or Astrology; every invention, from the mariner's compass to monk Schwartz's gunpowder,—was an agent of the Reformation. We find Reformers, from the time of Marcion to John Wessel. Some tried, as in the time of Christ, to put new wine in old bottles, but losing both, looked round for new things. That long train of Mystics, from Dionysius the Areopagite, to Meister Eckart of Strasburg, prepared for the work that Luther built up with manly shouting.

* Ranke, in his Die römischen Päbste, &c. im 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert, gives abundant proof of this reformatory movement in the Church itself. See particularly Vol. I. B. II.; but the tale of ecclesiastical crime is even more distinctly told.

To sum up the claim of this party: The Catholic Church is based on the assumption that *God inspires that Church, miraculously and exclusively.* This assumption is false. Though the oldest organization in the world, it has no right over the soul of man.*

* See the Roman doctrine thoroughly attacked in the ponderous folio of Joh. Gerhard, Confessio Catholica, &c. &c. &c., Frankfort, 1679; and the superficial and somewhat one-sided Essay of M. Bouvet, Du Catholicisme, du Protestantisme, et de la Philosophie en France; Paris, 1840. Many of the most important claims of the Catholic Church — that of supremacy in temporal affairs, Infallibility in spiritual matters, and the right to enforce doctrines, — are abandoned by an able Catholic writer, J. H. Von Wessenberg, the present Bishop of Constance. See his Die grossen Kirchenversammlungen des 15ten and 16ten Jahrhundert, Const. 1840, 4 vols. 8vo.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROTESTANT PARTY.

THE distinctive idea of Protestantism is this: *The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the direct Word of God, and therefore the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice.* It logically denied that an inspired man was needed to stand between mankind and the inspired Word;—each man must consult the Scriptures for himself; expound them for himself, by the common rules of grammar, logic, and rhetoric;—each man, therefore, must have freedom of conscience up to this point, but no farther. God was immanent in the Scriptures, not in the Churches. The ecclesiastical tradition was no better than other tradition; it might, or it might not, be true;—the Catholic Church had no miraculous inspiration. Now it was a great step for the human race to make this assertion at that time; it demanded no little manhood to make it in the sixteenth century. Where were the men who had made it in the sixth and all subsequent centuries? Their bones and their disgrace paved the highway on which Luther walked as a giant to a fame world-wide and abiding. At first the work of the Protestants, like that of all Reformers, was negative, exposing the errors and sins of the Catholic Church; clearing the spot on which to erect their Church; fighting with words and blows. In the war of the giants, sore strokes must be laid on. The ground shook and the sky rang with the quarrel. "God will see," said stout

Martin, " which gives out first, the Pope or Luther." The Church thundered and lightened from the seven-hilled city, looking with a frown towards Saxony;—Luther gave back thunder for thunder, scorn for scorn. Did the Church condemn Luther?—he paid it back in the same pence. The Church says—" Luther is a heretic, and should be burned, had we the skill to catch him;"—Luther declares that " the Pope is a wolf possessed with the devil, and we ought to raise the hue and cry, and tear him to pieces without judge or jury."

I. THE MERIT OF PROTESTANTISM.

Its merit as a Reformation was both negative and positive. It was right in declaring the Roman Church, with its clergy, cardinals, councils, popes, no more inspired than other men, and therefore no more fit than others to keep tradition, expound scripture, and hold the keys of heaven; nay more, that by reason of their prejudice, ignorance, sloth, ambition, crime, and sin in general, they had less inspiration, for they had grieved away the Spirit of God. It was right in denying the authority of the Church in temporal matters; in declaring that its tradition was no better than other tradition—nay, was even less valuable, for the Church had told lies in the premises,—and the fact was undeniable. The Protestants justified their words in this matter by exposing the weak points of the Church, its lies, false doctrines, wicked practices; its arrogance and worldly ambition; the disagreement of the popes, the contradictions of the councils and fathers, and the crimes of the clergy, who make up the Church. It was right in examining the canon of Scripture, casting off what was apochryphal, or spurious; in demanding that the laity should have the Bible and the Sacraments in full, and claiming the right to interpret Scripture, reject tradition, relics, saints, and have nothing between them and Christ or God. It was right in

demanding freedom of conscience for all men, up to the point of accepting the Scriptures.* This was no vulgar merit, but one we little appreciate. The men who fight the battle for all souls, rarely get justice from the world.

II. THE VICE AND DEFECT OF PROTESTANTISM.

Its capital vice was to *limit the power of private inspiration*, and, since there must be somewhere a standard external or within us, *to make the* BIBLE MASTER OF THE SOUL. *Theoretically*, it narrowed the sources of Religious truth, and instead of three, as the Catholics, it gave us but one; though *practically* it did more than the Catholics, for it brought men directly to one fountain of truth.† Now if the Catholic had an undue reverence for the organized Church, so had the Protestant for the Scriptures. Both sought in the world of concrete things an infallible source and standard of moral and religious truth. There is none such out of the soul; neither in the Church, nor the Bible; — both must be idealized, to support this pretension. Accordingly, as the one party idealized the Church, assumed its divine Origin, its Infallibility, and the exclusive immanence of God therein; so the other assumed the divine origin of the Scriptures, their infallibility, and the exclusive immanence

* It is not necessary to cite the proofs of the above statements from the Reformers, as they may be found in the dogmatical writers so often referred to before. The most significant passages may be found collected in Harles, Theologische Encyclopädie und Methodologie, Leips. 1837, chap. iii.–iv. The early Reformers differed in opinion as to the authority of the Bible. It is well known with what freedom and contempt Luther himself spoke of parts of the canon, and the stories of miracles in the Gospels and Pentateuch. But his own opinion fluctuated on this as on many other points. He cared little for Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Indeed, it would not require a very perverse ingenuity to make out, from the Reformers, a *Straussianismus ante Straussium*.

† This is, logically speaking, the fundamental principle of the Reformers, though qualifications of it may be found in Luther, Melancthon, Zwingle, and Calvin, which detract much from its scientific rigour. But still the principle was laid down at the bottom of the Protestant fabric, and is still a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to free men.

of God in them. Has either party proved its point? Neither is capable of proof. As the Catholic maintained, in the very teeth of notorious facts, that there was no contradiction in the doctrines of the Church, its popes and councils and more eminent fathers—in the very face of Reason, that all its doctrines were true and divine; so did the Protestant, in the teeth of facts equally notorious, deny that there was any contradiction in the doctrines of the Bible, its prophets, evangelists, apostles—in the very face of Reason, declared that every word of Scripture was the word of God, and eternally true! Nay more, the Protestants maintained that the record of Scripture was so sacred, a divine Providence watched over it, and kept all errors from the manuscript. What a cry the Protestants made about the "various readings"! Could Cappellus get his book on the textual variations of the Old Testament printed under Protestant favour? A perpetual miracle, said Protestantism, kept the text of both the Old and New Testaments from the smallest accident. But that doctrine would not stand against the noble army of various readings, thirty thousand strong.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." The Protestants, denying there was inspiration now as in Paul's time, yet knowing they must have religious truth, or the Word of God, clung like dying men to the letter of the Bible, as their only hope. The words of the Bible had but one meaning, not many; that was to be got at by the usual methods—pious and honest study of the grammatical, logical, rhetorical sense thereof.* With its word, man must stop, for he has reached the fountain-head. But has the word of God become a letter? is all truth in the Bible, and

* Chemnitz (Loci Communes, Part III. p. 235, *et al.*) denounces the doctrine of the Church, that the Bible was "imperfect, insufficient, ambiguous, and obscure." Luther and Melancthon condemn the old practice of *allegorizing* Scripture. See the passages collected in Harles, *ubi sup.*, p. 133, *et seq.*, and the dogmatical writers above referred to. Strauss, Glaubenslehre, § 12, 13; Seckendorf, De Lutheranismo, &c., ed. 1688, p. 10, 88, 130, 174.

is no error, no contradiction therein? So said Protestantism. This was its vice. But God has set one thing against another, so that all work together for good. It was a great step to get back to the Bible, and freedom of conscience and good sense in its exposition.

Protestantism wrought wonders, and overthrew the magicians in the Egypt of the Church. It saw the ecclesiastical Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, with destruction opening its hungry jaws to devour them. But it had a mixed multitude in its own train, and left the people in the wilderness, wandering like the Gibeonites, with no power to get bread from Heaven, or water from the living rock. Its Jethros were philologists who knew nothing of the spiritual land of hills and brooks, and milk and honey. Its leaders—men noble as Moses, men of vast soul, and Herculean power to do and suffer, to speak and to be silent—had a Pisgah-view of the land of promise, and wished God would put his spirit on all the people. But they died and gave no sign. The nations are still wandering in the desert; carrying the Sanctuary, the Ark, the Table of the Law; sometimes sighing after the leeks and garlics left behind; now and then worshipping a calf of gold, of parchment, or spoken wind; murmuring and rebellious; with here and there a Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rising up in their ranks,—but with no Moses nor pillar of fire. Still, God be praised! we are no longer slaves under the iron bondage of the Church. They were MEN who dared to come out, those heroes of the Reformation. This Protest against the Roman Church was one of the noblest the world ever saw; perhaps never surpassed but once, and then by a single soul, big as yesterday, to-day, and forever. Stout-hearted Martin Luther, with his face rugged, homely and honest, with a soul of fire, and words like cannon-shot, a heart that feared neither Pope nor Devil, and a living faith that sang in his dungeon—"The Lord our God is a castle strong:"—the greatest of the prophets and the "chiefest of apostles"

seems little to him. We may thank God and take courage, remembering that such men have been, and may be. There is no tyranny like the spiritual—that of soul over soul; no heroism like that which breaks the bonds of such tyranny. You shall find men thick as acorns in autumn, who will wade neck-deep in blood, and charge up to the cannon's mouth, when it rains shot, as snow-flakes at Christmas;—such men may be had for red coats and dollars and "fame;"—it requires only vulgar bravery for that, and men who are "food for powder." But to oppose the Institution which your fathers loved in centuries gone by; to sweep off the altars, forms, and usages which ministered to your mother's piety, helped her to bear the bitter ills and crosses of life, and gave her winged tranquillity in the hour of death; to sunder your ties of social sympathy; destroy the rites associated with the aspiring dream of childhood and its earliest prayer, and the sunny days of youth;—to disturb these, because they weave chains, invisible but despotic, which bind the arm and fetter the foot and confine the heart; to hew down the hoary tree under whose shadow the nations played their game of life, and found in death the clod of the valley sweet to their weary bosom,—to destroy all this, because it poisons the air and stifles the breath of the world—it is a sad and a bitter thing; it makes the heart throb, and the face, that is hard as iron all over in public, weeps in private—weak woman's tears, it may be. Such trials are not for vulgar souls; they feel not the riddle of the world. The Church—it will do for them, for it bakes bread, and brews beer. Would you more? No!—that is enough for blind-mouths. Duty, Freedom, Truth, a divine Life,—what are they? Trifles, no doubt, to monk Tetzel, the Leos and the Bembos, and other sleek persons, new and old; but to a heart that swells with Religion, like the Atlantic pressed by the wings of the storm, they are the real things of God, for which all poor temporalities of fame, ease, and life, are to be cast to the winds. It is needful that a man be true—

not that he live. Are men dogs, that they must be happy? Luther dared to be undone.

The sacramental error of Protestantism, in restricting private judgment to the doctrines of the Bible, was in part neutralized by admitting freedom of individual conscience, and therefore the right and the duty to interpret the Bible. Here it allowed great latitude;—each man might determine by historical evidence his own canon of Scripture, in some measure, and devise his own method of interpretation. Yet the old spirit of the Church was still there, to watch over the exegesis. The Bible was found very elastic, and therefore hedges were soon set about it, in the shape of symbolical books, creeds, thirty-nine articles, catechisms, and confessions of faith, which cooped up the soul in narrower limits. But these formularies, like the Scriptures, were found also indefinite, and would hold the most opposite doctrines; for though the schoolmen doubted whether two similar spirits could occupy at once the same point of space, it is put beyond a doubt that two very dissimilar doctrines may occupy the same words at the same time. Taking "substance for doctrine," any creed may be subscribed to, and a solemn ecclesiastical farce continue to be enacted, as edifying if not so entertaining as the old miracle plays. That was popular advice for theologians which the old Jesuit gave—"Let us fix our own meaning to the words, and then subscribe them." The maxim is still "as good as new."

This new and exclusive reverence for the Bible led to popular versions of it, to a hard study of its original tongues, and a most diligent examination of all the means of interpreting its words. Here a wide field was opened for critical study, which even yet has not been thoroughly explored. A host of theological scholars sprang up, armed to the teeth with Greek and "the terrible Hebrew," and attended by a Babylonian legion of oriental tongues and rabbinical studies,

—scholars who had no peers in the church, at least since the time of Jerome, who translated (so he says) the book of Tobit from the Chaldee in a day! But this study led to extravagance. Sound principles of interpretation were advanced by some of the Reformers, but they were soon abandoned. Thus, to take a single example: Luther, Zwingle, and Melancthon said, A passage of Scripture can have but one meaning.* It is unquestionably true. But certain doctrines must be maintained, and defended by Scripture; therefore, if this could not be done by the *natural* meaning of Scripture, a *secondary sense*, or a *type*, must be sought. Of course it was found. The old *allegorical* way of interpretation was bad, but this *typical* improvement and doctrine of secondary senses was decidedly worse.† In the hands of both Protestant and Catholic interpreters, the Bible is clay, to be turned into any piece of ecclesiastical pottery the case may require: persecuted in one *sense*, they flee into another. It is a very Proteus, and takes all forms at pleasure. Now it is a river placid as star-light; then a lion roaring for his prey. Job went through some troubles in his life, as the poem relates; but even death has not placed him where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Professors and critics have handled him more sorely than Satan, his friends, or his wife;—they have made him "sin with his lips;" his saddest disease he has caught at their hands; his greatest calamity was his exposition. "Oh that mine adversary had written a book!" said the patient man. Did he wish to *explain* it? Then is he rightly treated, for the *explainers* have ploughed upon his back: they made long their furrows. Moses, says the Hebrew Scripture, was the most *tormented* of all the earth; but his trials in the wilderness were nothing to his sufferings on the rack of

* Luther himself did not always adhere to this rule in explaining the Old Testament.

† See Strauss, Leben Jesu, § 3-4; Palfrey, *ubi sup.*, Vol. II. Lect. XXXIII.; Rosenmüller, Handbuch für Literatur der bib. Kritik, &c., Vol. IV. p. 1, *et seq.*

exegesis; the Critics and Truth have disputed over him as the Devil and Michael, but not without railing! The prophets had a hard time of it in their day and generation: but Jeremiah was put into his darkest dungeon by Christian scholars; Isaiah was never so painfully sawn asunder as by the interpreters, to whom facts are as no facts, and one day as a thousand years, in their chronology; Jonah and Daniel were never in such fatal jeopardy as at the present day. A choleric man in the Psalms could not curse his foes, but he uttered maledictions against the enemies of the Church; nor speak of recovering from illness, but he predicts an event which took place a thousand years later. A young Hebrew could not write an Anacreontic, but he spoke "of Christ and the Church." Nay, Daniel, Paul, and John must predict the "abomination of Rome,"—all the great events as they take place, and even the end of the world, in the day some fanatical interpreter happens to live. Is the Bible the Protestant standard of faith? Then it is more uncertain than the things to be measured;—the cloud in Hamlet is not more variable than the "infallible rule" in the hands of the interpreters. The best things are capable of the worst abuse. Alas! when shall Reason and Religion have their place with the sons of men?

Now since Protestantism denied the immanence of God in the Church, as such, and flouted the claim to inspiration when made by any modern, it is plain there could be no *one authoritative church;* all were equal, resting on the same foundation. Then, admitting freedom of judgment, within the limits of the Bible, and great latitude in expounding that; not very often burning men for heresy—though cases enough in point might easily be cited; and encouraging great activity of mind,—it led to diversity of opinions, sentiments, and practice. This began in the Reformers themselves. Religion took different shapes in Ulrich von Hutten and John Calvin. Men obeyed their natural affinities, and

grouped themselves into sects, each of which, recognizing the great principle of all religion—the special doctrine of Christianity—the peculiar dogma of Protestantism,—has also some distinctive tenet of its own. Soon as the outward pressure of papal hostility was somewhat lightened, these conflicting elements separated into several churches. Now neglecting those, with which we in New England have little to do, the rest may be divided into two parties, namely,—
I. *Those who set out from the idea that God is a Sovereign;*
II. *Those who set out from the idea that God is a Father.*
The theology and ethics, the virtue and vice of each, require a few words.

I. THE PARTY THAT SETS OUT FROM THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

This party takes the supernatural view before pointed out. It makes God an awful king. The universe shudders at his presence; the thunder and earthquake are but faint whispers of his wrath, as the magnificence of earth and sky is but one ray out from the heaven of his glory. He sits in awful state. Human flesh quails at the thought of Him;—it is terrible to fall into His hands, as fall we must. Man was made not to be peaceful and blessed, but to serve the selfishness of the All-King, to glorify God, and to praise him. Originally, man was made pure and upright; but to tempt beyond his strength the frail creature He had made, God forbade him the exercise of a natural inclination, not evil in itself. Man disobeyed the arbitrary command;—he fell. His first sin brought on him the eternal vengeance of the all-powerful King; hurled him at once from his happiness; took from him the majesty of his nature; left him poor, and impotent, and blind, and naked; transmitting to each of his children all the guilt of the primeval sin. Adam was the "federal head of the human race:" "By Adam's fall we sinned all." Man has now no power of himself to discern good from evil, and follow the good; his best efforts

are but filthy rags in God's sight; his prayer an abomination. Man is born totally depraved; sin is native in his bones; hell is his birthright. To be anything acceptable to God, he must renounce his nature, violate the law of the soul. He is a worm of the dust, and turns this way and that, and up and down, but finds nothing in nature to cling by and climb.

God is painted in the most awful colours in the Old Testament. The flesh quivers while we read, and the soul recoils upon itself with suppressed breath and ghastly face and sickening heart. The very Heavens are not clean in his sight. The grim, awful King of the world, "a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children," "angry with the wicked every day," and "keeping anger forever," "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," —He hates sin, though he created it, and man, though he made him to fall, "with a perfect hatred." Vengeance is His, and He will repay. He must, therefore, punish man with all the exquisite torture which infinite Thought can devise, and Omnipotence apply; a Creditor, He exacts the uttermost farthing; a King, "upheld by his jury," the smallest offence is high-treason — the greatest of crimes. His code is Draconian: he that offends in one point is guilty of all. Good were it for man that he had never been born —extremest vengeance awaits him; — the jealous God will come upon him in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder. Hence comes the doctrine of "eternal damnation," a dogma which Epicurus and Strato would have called it blasphemy to teach.

But God, though called personal, is yet infinite. Mercy, therefore, must be a part of His nature. He desires to save man from the horrors of hell. Shall He change the nature of things? That is impossible. Shall He forgive all mankind outright? The Infinite King forgive high-treason! It is not consistent with divine dignity to forgive the smallest violation of his perfect law. A sin, however

small, is an infinite evil: He must have an infinite "satisfaction." All the human race are sinners, by being born of woman; the damning sin of Adam vests in all their bones; —they must all suffer eternal damnation, to atone for their inherited sin, unless some "substitute" take their place.

Now it has long been a maxim in the courts of law,—whence many forensic terms have been taken and applied to theology, especially since the time of Anselm,—that a man's property may suffer in place of his person; and since his friends may transfer their property to him, they may suffer in his place "vicarious punishment." Thus before Almighty God, there may be a substitute for the sinner. This doctrine is a theological fiction; it is of the same family with what are called "legal fictions" in the courts, and "practical fictions" in the street — a large and ancient family, it must be confessed, that has produced great names. But no *man* can be a substitute for another; for sin is infinite, and he finite. Though all the liquid fires of hell be poured from eternity on the penitent head of the whole race, not a single sin, committed even in sleep, by one man, could be atoned for. An infinite "ransom" must be paid to save a single soul. God's "Mercy" overcomes his "Justice;" for man deserves nothing but "damnation:" He will provide the ransom. So He sent down his Son, to fulfil all the law—which man could not fulfil,—realize infinite goodness, and thus merit the infinite reward, and then suffer all the tortures of infinite sin as if he had not fulfilled it, and thus prepare a ransom for all; "purchasing" their "salvation." Thus men are saved from hell by the "vicarious suffering" of the Son. But this would leave them in a negative state—not bad enough for hell—not good enough for heaven. The "merits" of the Son, as well as his sufferings, must be set down to their account; and thus man is elevated to Heaven by the "imputed righteousness" of the Son.

But how can the Son achieve these *infinite* merits, and

endure this *infinite* torment, and "redeem" and "save" the race? He must be infinite, and then it follows; for all the actions of the Infinite are also infinite, in this logic. But two Infinites there cannot be. The Son, therefore, is the Father, and the Father the Son. God's Justice is appeased by God's Mercy;—*God* "sacrifices" *God*, for the sake of man. Thus the infinite "satisfaction" is accomplished; God has paid *God* the infinite ransom for the infinite sin; the "sacrifice" has been offered; the "atonement" completed; "we are bought with a price." "As in *Adam* all died, so in *Christ* shall all be made alive."

Now, in the very teeth of logic, this system under consideration maintains that God did not thus purchase the redemption of *all;* for such "forgiveness" would ill comport with his dignity. Therefore certain "conditions" are to be complied with, before man is entitled to this salvation. God knew from all eternity who would be saved, and they are said to be "elected from before the foundation of the world" to eternal happiness. God is the cause of their compliance — for man has no free will, — hence "foreordination;" they are not saved by their own merit, but by Christ's,—hence "particular redemption;" having no will, they must be "called" and moved by God, and if elected, must come to him,—hence "effectual calling;" if to be saved, they must continue in "grace,"—hence the "perseverance of the saints." The salvation of the "elect," the damnation of the non-elect, is all effected by the "decrees of God," the "agency of the Holy Spirit," the "satisfaction of Christ;"—all is a work of "divine grace."

The doctrine of the "Trinity" has always been connected with this system. It does not embrace three Gods, as it has often been alleged, but one God in three persons,—as the Hindoos have one God in thirty millions of persons, and the Pantheists one God in all persons and all things. The Father sits on the throne of his glory; the Son, at his right hand, "intercedes" for man; the Holy Spirit "pro-

ceeds" from the Father and the Son; "calls" the saints, and makes them "persevere." This doctrine of the Trinity covers a truth, though it often conceals it. Its religious significance—the same with that of Polytheism—seems to be this: God does not limit himself within the unity of his essence, but incarnates himself in man,—hence the Son; diffuses himself in space and in spirit, works with men both to will and to do,—hence the Holy Ghost.*

1. *Merits of this Party.*

This party has great practical merits. The doctrine sketched above shows the hatefulness of sin, the terrible evils it brings upon the world—Alas! it need not look long to see them. It shows man at first the child of God—holding daily intercourse with the Father—enjoying the raptures of Heaven on earth,—but by one step cast out, degraded, lost, undone! It shows the world full of sweet sunshine, truth, beauty, love, till Sin entered, and then—"the trail of the Serpent is over it all." It tells how sin benumbs the mind, palsies the heart, and shuts out wisdom at every entrance, bringing death to the intellect, death to the affections, death to the soul. The great enemy of man is the child of sin. It tells man he is the son of God, fallen from his high estate, and crushed by the fall. But he may yet return: Christ will bind up his wounds; wash away all sin with his blood; and he may start anew. It encourages men who are steeped in sin; tells them they may yet return. It says, "Come unto Christ." But alas! the wounded man, with no freedom, must wait till the Holy Ghost, like the good Samaritan, bind up his wounds and bid him rise and walk. If he is of the elect, the invitation will come,—and each hopes he is of that blessed company.

One excellence comes out of its very defect: It thinks none can be saved but by accepting Christianity, a know-

* See Miscellaneous Writings, Art. XII.

ledge of which comes through the letter of the Bible; therefore it is indefatigable in sending Bibles and missionaries the world over. If they do little good where they go, the very purpose and effort are good. A man is always warmed by the smoke of his own generous sacrifice.

It recommends an austere morality. It calls on men to repent; addresses rousing sermons to the *fears* of the wicked, and moves men whom higher motives would not move —men who ask pay for goodness. It has a deep reverence for God; counts Religion a reality; insists on a right heart. It watches over sin with a jealous eye. Coming from a principle so deep as reverence for God—believing it has all of truth in the lids of the Bible—confiding in the intercession and atonement of Christ—setting before the righteous the certainty of God's aid if they are faithful, to assure their perseverance, and promising all the rewards of heaven, —it makes men strong, very strong. We see its influence, good and bad, on some of the fathers of New England,— in their self-denial, their penitence, their austere devotion, the unconquerable daring, the religious awe, which marked those iron men.

2. *The Vices of this Party.*

If it have great merits, it has great faults. Its faults come from its peculiar doctrine, while its merits have a deeper source. It makes God dark and awful; a judge, not a protector; a king, not a Father; jealous, selfish, vindictive. He is the Draco of the Universe; the Author of Sin, but its unforgiving avenger. Man must hate the picture it makes of God. He is the Jehovah of the book of Numbers, more cruel than Odin or Belus. He punishes sin —though its Author—for his own glory, not for man's benefit and correction. All the lovely traits of divine character it bestows upon the Son: he is mild and beautiful, as God is awful and morose. Men rush from the Father; they flee to the Son. Its religion is fear of God, not love of him; for man cannot love what is not lovely.

This system degrades man. It deprives him of freedom; —it makes him not only the dwarf of himself—for the actual man is but the dwarf of the ideal and possible man —but a being hapless and ill-born; the veriest worm that crawls the globe. To take a step toward Heaven, he must deny his nature, and crucify himself. He is born totally depraved, and laden besides with the sins of Adam. He can do nothing to recover from these sins: the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification; this righteousness is received through faith, which is the gift of God; and so salvation is wholly of grace;—the salvation of man is made for him, not by him. It logically annihilates the difference between good and evil, denying the ultimate value of a divine life. It takes out of the pale of manhood its fairest sons,—prophets, saints, apostles— Moses, Jesus, Paul,—and makes their character miraculous, not human. It tears off the crown of royalty from man; makes Jesus a God; does not tell us we are born sons of God as much as Jesus, and may stand as close to God. It does not tell of God now near at hand, but a long while ago. It makes the Bible a TYRANT OF THE SOUL. It is our MASTER in all departments of thought. Science must lay his kingly head in the dust; Reason veil her majestic countenance; Conscience bow him to the earth; Religion keep silence when the priest uplifts the Bible. Man is subordinate to the apocryphal, ambiguous, imperfect, and often erroneous scripture of the Word: the Word itself, as it comes straightway from the fountain of Truth, through Reason, Conscience, and Religion, he must not have. It takes the Bible for God's statute-book; combines old Hebrew notions into a code of ethics; takes figures for fact; settles questions in Morals and Religion by texts of Scripture! It can justify anything out of the Bible. It wars to the knife with gaiety of heart; condemns Amusement as sinful; sneers at Common Sense; spits upon Reason, calling it "carnal;" appeals to low and selfish aims—to fear,

the most selfish and base of all passions. Fear of hell is the bloody knout with which it scourges reluctant Flesh across the finite world, and whips him smarting into Heaven at last. It does not know that goodness is its own recompense, and vice its own torture; that judgment takes place daily, and God's laws execute themselves. Shall I be bribed to goodness by hope of Heaven, or driven by fear of hell? It makes man do nothing from the love of what is good, beautiful, and true. It asks, Shall a man love goodness as a picture, *for itself?* Its divine life is but a good bargain. It makes a *day* of judgment; heaven and hell to begin after death,—while goodness is Heaven, and vice Hell, now and forever.

It makes Religion unnatural to man, and of course hostile; Christianity alien to the soul. It paves hell with children's bones; has a personal devil in the world, to harry the land, and lure or compel men to eternal woe. Its God is diabolical. It puts an Intercessor between God and man; relies on the Advocate. Cannot the Infinite love his frail children without teasing?—needs He a chancellor to advise Him to use forgiveness and mercy?—can men approach the Every-where-present only by attorney, as a beggar comes to a Turkish king? Away with such folly! Christ bears his own sins, not another's. How can his righteousness be "imputed" to me? Goodness out of me is not mine; helps me no more than another's food feeds, or his sleep refreshes me. Adam's sin,—it was Adam's affair, not mine.

This system applies to God the language of kings' courts,—trial, sentence, judgment, pardon, satisfaction, allegiance, day of judgment. Like a courtier it lays stress on forms:—baptism, which in itself is nothing but a dispensation of water; the Lord's supper, which of itself is nothing but a dispensation of wine and bread. It dwells in professions of faith; watches for God's honour. It makes men stiff, unbending, cold, formal, austere, seldom lovely. They have the strength of the Law, not the beauty of the Gospel; the

cunning of the Jew, not the simplicity of the Christian. You know its hearty followers as soon as you see them;—the rose is faded out of their cheeks; their mouths drooping and sad; their appearance says, "Alas! my fellow-worm! there is no more sunshine, for the world is damned." It is a faith of stern, morose men, well befitting the descendants of Odin, and his iron peers. Its Religion is a principle, not a sentiment; a foreign matter imported into the soul by forethought and resolution, not a native fountain of joy and gladness, leaping up in winter's frost, and summer's gladness, playing in the sober autumn, or the sunshine of spring. Its Christianity is frozen mercury in the bosom of the warm-hearted Christian, who, by nature, would go straight to God, pray spontaneous as the blackbird sings, love a thousand times where he hated not once, and count a divine life the greatest good in this world, and ask nothing more in the next. The Heaven of this system is a grand pay-day, where Humility is to have her coach and six, forsooth, because she has been humble; the Saints and the Martyrs, who bore trials in the world, are to take their vengeance by shouting "Hallelujah! Glory to God!" when they see the anguish of their old persecutors, and the "smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever." Do the joys of Paradise pall on the pleasure-jaded sense of the "Elect"? They look off in the distance to the tortures of the damned, where Destruction is naked before them, and Hell hath no covering; where the Devil with his angels stirreth up the embers of the fire which is never quenched; where the doubters, whom the Church could neither answer nor put to silence; where the great men of antiquity, Confucius, Budha, Fo, Hermes, Zoroaster, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; where the men, great and gifted and glorious, who mocked at difficulty, softened the mountains of despair, and hewed a path amid the trackless waste, that mortal feet might tread the way of peace; where the great men of modern times, who would not insult the Deity by

bowing to the foolish word of a hireling priest;—where all these writhe in their tortures, turn and turn and find no ray, but yell in fathomless despair; and when the Elect behold all this, they say, striking on their harps of gold, "Aha! We are comforted, and Thou tormented, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and our garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb."

This system exists nowhere in its perfection: that is only ideal. It is incarnated imperfectly in many forms. But it is the groundwork of the popular theology of New England.* It appears variously modified in all the chief denominations of North America and Great Britain. No one of all the sects which represent it, but has great excellences in spite of this hateful system. Each of them is doing a good but imperfect work. A rude nation must have a rude doctrine. Yet such is the system on which they rest their theology; though their *Religion*, say what they will, comes from no such quarter. This system is older than Protestantism, and is the child of many fathers. However, it is continually approaching its end;—the battering-ram which levelled the philosophy of the Stagyrite and the schoolmen, will beat, ere-long, on the theology of the Church. And how shall it stand? It is based on a lie, and that lie undermined. A man who loves wife and child, and would die any death to save a friend, will be slow to believe in total depravity; he that sees a swarm of bees in summer, or hears the blackbird sing in his honeysuckle, will not believe that God is a devil, though all the divines in the Church quote the Fathers and Scriptures to prove it. God speaks truth always,—and will the pulpit prevail against him? The sands of this theology are numbered, and its glass shaken.

* I have been careful not to cite authorities, lest *individual churches* or *writers* should be deemed responsible for the sin of the mass. But *I have not spoken without book.*

II. THE PARTY THAT SETS OUT FROM THE PATERNITY OF GOD.

This system makes God not a King but a Father; infinite in power, wisdom, and love. His love rays out in every direction, seeking to bless the all of things. The world,—its overarching heavens, its ocean, its mountains, its flowers that brighten in the sunbeam; the crimson and purple that weave a lustrous veil for the face of Day, at the rising and decline of light; the living things of earth—beast, bird, fish, insect, so full of happiness that the world hums with its joy,—all these it counts but a whisper of God's goodness, though all these babbling elements can teach. It sees the same in the Bible, for it *will* see itself, and walks in the shade of its own halo of glory, and so treads on rainbows where it steps.

This doctrine of God's goodness is a mighty truth,—poorly apprehended as yet, though destined to a great work, and development which shall never end. Men can only see in God what is in themselves; their conception of God cannot transcend their own ideal stature of spirit. Since goodness is not active in most men, nor love predominant, they see God as Power to be feared—at best as Wisdom to be reverenced,—not as Goodness to be loved;—nor can they, till themselves become lovely.

1. *The Merits of this Party.*

The merits of this system are very great. It makes goodness the cause of all. God made the world to bless it. His love flowed forth—a celestial stream that sparkles in the sky, surrounding the world. Apparent evils are but good in disguise, save only sin; and this, man brings on himself, through the imperfection of his nature, progressive and free. Goodness is infinite, but sin and evil finite. It sees a perfect system of optimism everywhere. The infinite Love must desire the best thing; the infinite Wisdom devise means for

that end; and the infinite Power bring about the result. All things are overruled for good at the last. Sin is a point which mistaken man passes through in his development. Suffering is man's instructor. It was good for Isaiah and Stephen and Paul to bear the burthens they bore. Affliction is success in a mask. It makes the world look fair, and the face joyful. It hears the word of love, even in the voice of the earthquake and the tread of the pestilence. Evil is not ultimate but transient. It tells man of his noble nature, his lofty duty, his fair destination if faithful. It makes Religion natural to man; bids him obey its law, and be blessed; not to be good or do good for fear of hell or hope of heaven, but for itself. It would not have men fear God—the Religion of the Old Testament, but love him—the Religion of the New Testament. It tells us we are made for goodness here, and heaven hereafter. It denies original sin, or, admitting that, makes it of no effect, for Christ has restored all to their first estate; thus avoiding the logical absurdity of the last form. Its hell is not eternal, for the infinite love of God must make the whole of existence a blessing to each man. God is so lovely, that we flee as children to his arms, a refuge from all the troubles, follies, and sins of life. It shows His uncontainable goodness in earth and sea and sky; in the prophets and apostles, sent to bless; in Jesus the Saviour, commissioned to redeem the world—to seek and save the lost. It fills the soul with tranquillity, peace, an exceeding trust in God. Serenely the man goes about his duties; is not borne down with his cross, though never so weighty; looks on and smiles, fearing no evil but sin and lack of faith. As he looks back, he sees an end of his perfection, but does not despair at the broadness of the divine law, though his steps totter in this infancy of his being, for he sees worlds open before him, where a stronger sunlight and a purer sky await him; where Reason, Conscience, and Religion shall finish their perfect work, and he shall not be weary with his walk, nor faint though he runs.

This system allows no ultimate evil as a background of God; believes in no vindictive punishment. The woes of sin are but its antidote. Suffering comes from wrong-doing, as well-being from virtue. If there be suffering in the next world, it is, as in this, but the medicine of the sickly soul. It allows no contradiction between God's Goodness and Mercy. We require to be reconciled with Him, not He with us. We love Him soon as seen. It makes Religion inward; of the life and heart; the son's service, not the slave's; a sentiment as well as a principle; an encouragement no less than a restraint. God seeks to pour himself into the heart, as the sun into the roses of June. These are no vulgar merits.

2. *The Defects and Vices of this Party.*

So far as this system is derived from its fundamental Idea, it has no defect nor vice; for the Idea is absolute, and answers to the fact—God is good. But the absurdities of other forms mingle their pestilent breath with the fragrance of truth; and the party that poorly espouses this divine idea has its defects. Men do not see the sinfulness of sin; they underrate the strength of human passion—cupidity, wrath, selfishness, intrenched in the institutions of the world, and belonging to the present low stage of civilization. They reflect too little on the evil that comes from violating the law of God; overlook the horrors of outraged conscience, and do not remember that suffering must last as long as sin, and that man only can remove that from himself. They are not sufficiently zealous to do good to others, in a spiritual way.

This party has also its redundancies. It has taken much from the ungrateful doctrines of the darker system. Its followers rely on Authority, as all Protestants have done; they make man depend on Christ, who died centuries ago —not on himself, who lives now; forgetting that it is not the death of Jesus that helps us, but the death of Sin in our

heart; not the life of Jesus, the personal Christ, however divine, but the life of Goodness, Holiness, Love, in our own heart. A Christ outside the man is nothing; his divine life nothing. God is not a magician to blot sin out of the soul, and make man the same as if he had never sinned. Each man must be his own Christ, or he is no Christian.

No sect has fully developed the doctrine that is legitimately derived from this absolute Idea. When its time comes, it will annihilate this poor theology of our time, and give man his birthright. Some have attempted the work in all ages, and shared the fate of men before their time. Their bones lie mouldering in many a spot, accursed of men; they bore a prophet's mission, and met his fate. Were they hounds, that they must breathe, to be? Their seed has not perished out of the earth.

This doctrine in some measure tinges the faith of all sects with its rosy light. It abates the austerity of the Calvinist, the exclusiveness of the Baptist; does a great work in the camp of the Methodist. All churches have some of it, from the Episcopalian to the Mormonite, though in spite of their theology. There is something so divine in Religion, that it softens the ruggedest natures, and lets light even into theology. The sects, however, which chiefly rely upon it, are the Universalists, the Restorationists, and the Unitarians. But how poorly they do their work! with what curtains of darkness do they overcloud the holy of holies! What poor ineptitudes do they offer us in the midst of the sublimest doctrines! how does the timid littleness of their achievement, or endeavour, stand rebuked before absolute Religion —before the motto on the banner of Christianity,—God is Love! What despair of man, of Reason, of Goodness! what bowing and cringing to tradition! Are not *men* born in our time as of old, or has a race of Liliputians and Mannikins succeeded to Moses, Socrates, Jesus, Paul? But this must pass. The two former have at their basis the old super-

natural theology, and differ from the strictest sect mainly in their exegesis; they would believe anything which the Bible taught. They are, however, doing a great work. But the latter are of more importance in this respect, and, though few in numbers, deserve a notice by themselves.

OF THE UNITARIANS, AND THEIR PRESENT POSITION.

At first the "Unitarian heresy," as it was presumptuously called, was a protest against the unreasonable and unscriptural doctrines of the Church—a protest on the part of Reason and Religion; an attempt to apply Good Sense to Theology, to reconcile Knowledge with Belief, Reason with Revelation—to *humanize* the Church. Its theology was of the supernatural character, mingled with more or less of naturalism and spiritualism. It held to the first positive principles of the Reformation—the BIBLE and PRIVATE JUDGMENT. Contending, as it must, with the predominant sects—then even more arrogant and imperious than now, perhaps not knowing so well the ground they stood on,—its work, like most Reformations, was at first critical and negative: it was a "Statement of Reasons for not believing" certain doctrines, very justly deemed not scriptural. Thus it protested against the Trinity, total depravity, vindictive and eternal punishment, the common doctrines of the satisfaction of Christ, the malevolent character popularly ascribed to God. It recommended a deep, true morality, lived for its own sake; perhaps sometimes confounded Morality with Religion. To make sure of Heaven, it demanded a divine life, laying more stress on the character than on the creed; more on honesty, diligence, charity, than on grace before meat, or morning and evening prayers. In point of moral and religious life, as set forth in the two GREAT COMMANDS, its advocates fear no comparison with any sect. It was not boastful, but modest, cautious, unassuming; mindful of its own affairs; not giving a blow for a blow, nor returning

abuse—of which there was no lack—with similar abuse. It had a great work to do, and did it nobly. The spirit of reformers was in its leading men;—the sword of polemic theology rarely fell into more just and merciful hands. But the time has not come to celebrate with due honour the noble heart, the manly forbearance, the Christian heroism of those who have gone where the weary are at rest, or who yet linger here. They fought the battle like Christian scholars, long and well. The seven-fold shield of Orthodoxy was rent asunder, spite of its gorgon head. Its terrible spear, with its "five points," was somewhat blunted.

Thus far Unitarianism was but carrying out the principles of the Protestant Reformation, to get at the pure doctrines of Scripture, which was still the standard of faith. Some, it seems, silently abandoned the divine and infallible character of the Old Testament—as Socinus had done—but clung strongly as ever to that of the New Testament, while they admitted the greatest latitude in the criticism and exegesis of that collection. The Unitarians were at first the most reasonable of sectarians. The Bible was their creed. Thinking men, who would conclude for themselves, say the Church what it might say, naturally came up to Unitarianism;—hence its growth in the most highly cultivated portion of the new world,—and the most moral, it has been said. Men sick of the formality, the doctrines, the despotism of other sects; disgusted with the sophistry whose burrow was in the church; pained at the charlatanry which anointed dullness sometimes showed, as the clerical mantle blew aside, by chance;—these also came up to the Unitarians. Besides these, perhaps, men of no spiritual faith, who hated to hear hell mentioned, or to have piety demanded, came also, hoping to have less required of them. Pious men, hungering and thirsting after truth—men born religious—found here their home, where Reason and Religion were both promised their rights. This explains the growth of the sect. The Unitarians, seeing the violence,

the false zeal of other sects, the compassing of sea and land to make a proselyte, went, it may be thought, to the opposite extreme, in some cases. They were called "cold," and were never accused of carrying matters too fast and too far, and pushing Religion to extremes. They were never good fighters, unless when occasion compelled; they stood on the defensive, and never crossed their neighbour's borders, except to defend their own. They thought it better to live down an opponent, than to talk him down, or even to hew him down,—the old theological way of silencing an adversary whom it was difficult to answer.

Still, however, it seems there always were in their ranks men who thought freedom was too free; that "there must be limits to free inquiry," even within the canon; and that Unitarians must have a "creed." Others began to look into the Mythology of the Old Testament, and to talk very freely about the imperfections in the New Testament. Some even doubted if the whale swallowed Jonah. "Biblical criticism" opened men's eyes, and "terrible questions" were asked; great problems were coming up, which Luther never anticipated; for mankind has not stood still for three centuries —it has studied science and history, and learned some things never known before.

At length the negative work was well over, and the hostile forces of other sects were withdrawn, or the war changed into an armed neutrality—at most "a war of posts." The Christian name, however, is not yet allowed to the Unitarians by their foes; and a hearty malediction, a sly curse, or a jealous caution, shows even at this day the spirit that yet keeps its "theological odium," venomous as before. It is no strange thing for Unitarians to be pronounced Infidels, and remanded to Hell by their fellow-Christians! Now the time has come for Unitarianism—representing the movement party in theological affairs,—to do something; to develope the truth it has borne, latent and unconscious, in its bosom. It is plain what Reason and Religion demand:

Good sense must be applied to Theology; Religion applied to life,—both to be done radically, fearlessly, with honest earnestness; assumptions must be abandoned; the facts sought for; their relation and their law determined, and thus truth got at. Did the early Reformers see all things? —are we to stop where they stopped, and because they stopped? All false assumptions must be laid aside. The very foundation of Protestantism—the infallibility of Scripture,—is that a Fact, or a No-fact? But this is just the thing that is not done—which Unitarianism is not doing. The Trojan horse of sectarian organization is brought into the citadel, with the usual effect upon that citadel. The "Unitarian sect" is divided;—there is an "Old School," and a "New School" as it is called, and a chasm between them, not wide, as yet, but very deep. The "Old School" holds, in part, to the first principles of the Reformation; sees no farther; differs theoretically from the "Orthodox" party in exegesis, and in that alone; like that, is ready to believe anything which has a Thus-saith-the-Lord before it, at least if we may judge from the issue so often made. Its Christianity rests on the Authority of Jesus; that on the authority of his miracles; and his miracles on the testimony of the Evangelists. Therefore it is just as certain that there is a God, or an immortal soul, and religious duties, as it is certain that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead! It has somebody's word for it—But whose? Its religious sentiment is legitimated only by the sensations of the Apostles. This party says, as the Unitarian fathers never said: "There must be limits to free inquiry; we must not look into the *grounds* of religious belief, lest they be found no grounds: 'where ignorance is bliss, 't is folly to be wise!' The old landmarks must not be passed by, nor the Bible questioned as to its right to be master over the soul. Christianity must be rested on the authority of Christ, and that on the miracles, and the words of the New Testament. We must not inquire into their authority. If there is a contradiction

between the Word of the New Testament and Reason, why, the 'Word' must be believed in spite of Reason, for we can be much more certain of what we read than of what we think."

Thus the Old School assumes a position abhorred by primitive Unitarianism, which declared that FREE INQUIRY SHOULD NEVER STOP BUT WITH A CONVICTION OF TRUTH. Unitarianism, as represented by the majority of its adherents, refuses to fall back on Absolute Religion and Morality, with no reliance on Form, Tradition, Scripture, personal Authority. It creeps behind texts, usage, and does not look facts in the face. The cause, in part, is plain as noon-day. It is connected with a philosophy poor and sensual, the same in its basis with that which gave birth to the selfish system of Paley, the scepticism of Hume, the materialism of Hobbes, the denial of the French deists; the same philosophy which drives other sects in despair to their supernatural theory. This cuts men off from direct communion with God, and curtails all their efforts. Unitarianism, therefore, is in danger of becoming a truncated supernaturalism, its apex shorn off—all of supernaturalism but the supernatural. With a philosophy too rational to go the full length of the supernatural theory; too sensual to embrace the spiritual method, and ask no person to mediate between man and God,—it oscillates between the two; humanizes the Bible, yet calls it miraculous; believes in man's greatness, freedom, and spiritual nature, yet asks for a Mediator and Redeemer, and says, "Christ established a new relation between man and God." It admits that man can pray for himself, and God hear for Himself, and yet prays "in the name of Christ," and trusts an "intercessor." It censures the traditionary sects, yet sits itself among the tombs, and mourns over things past and gone; believes the humanity of Christ, that he was a model-man for us all, yet his miraculous birth likewise and miraculous powers, and makes him an anomalous and impossible being. It blinds men's

eyes with the letter, yet bids them look for the spirit; stops their ears with texts of the Old Testament, and then asks them to listen to the voice of God in their heart; it reverences Christ manfully, yet denounces all such as preach absolute Religion and Morality, as Christ did, on its own authority, with nothing between them and God — neither tradition nor person. Well might a weeping Jeremiah say of it, "Alas for thee! now hast thou forsaken the promise of thy youth, the joy of thine espousals!" or with the son of Sirach, "How wise wast thou in thy youth, and as a flood filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth; thy name went far into the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved; the countries marvelled at thee for thy songs and proverbs, and parables and *interpretations;* but by thy BODY wast thou brought into subjection; thou didst stain thine honour, so that thou broughtest wrath upon thy children, and WAST GRIEVED FOR THY FOLLY!" It has not kept its faith. It clings to the skirts of tradition, which, "as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers — keepeth nothing." It would believe nothing not reasonable, and yet all things scriptural; so it will not look facts in the face, and say, "This is the Bible — yes, in the New Testament — but out of Reason, none the less." So, with perfect good faith, it "explains away" what is offensive — "This is not in the canon; that is a false interpretation." To such a proficiency has this art of explaining away been carried, that the Scripture is a piece of wax in the Unitarian hand, and takes any shape. The Devil — is an oriental figure of speech; Paul believed in him no more than Peter Bayle; — the miraculous birth of Jesus, the ascension in the body, the stories of Abraham, Jonah, Daniel, are "true as *symbols*, not as *facts;*" — Moses and Isaiah never speak of Jesus in the Law and the Prophets, yet Jesus is right when he says they did; — David in the Psalm is a sick man, speaking only of himself; but when Simon Peter quotes that Psalm, the inspired king is predicting

Jesus of Nazareth!* These things are notorious facts. If the Athanasian Creed, the thirty-nine articles of the English Church, and the Pope's bull "Unigenitus," could be found in a Greek manuscript, and be proved to be the work of an "inspired" Apostle, no doubt Unitarianism would in good faith explain all three, and deny that they taught the doctrine of the Trinity or the fall of man. The Unitarian doctrine of inspiration,—can any one tell what it is?

But let the sect be weighed in an even balance, its theological defects be set off against the vast service it has done, and is still doing for morals and religion. But this is not the place for its praise. Of the "new school" of Unitarians,—if such it may be called, embracing as it does men of the greatest possible diversity of religious sentiment and opinion,—it is not decorous to speak here.

Now Unitarianism must do one of two things: *affirm the great doctrines of absolute Religion*—teaching that man is greater than the Bible, ministry, or church—that God is still immanent in mankind—that man saves himself by his own, and not by another's character—that a perfect divine life is the true service, and the only service God requires, the only source of well-being now or ever,—it must do this, or *cease to represent the progress of man in theology.* Then some other will take its office; stand God-parent to the fair child it has brought into the world, but dares not own.

To sum up what has been said: We see that the Catholic and the Protestant party both start with a false assumption,—the *divinity of the Church,* or *that of the Bible;* both claim mastery over the soul; but both fail to give or allow

* The work on the Old Testament by Dr. Palfrey, one of its most distinguished scholars, finds no favour with this party; though, excepting the valuable works of Dr. Geddes, it is the only attempt ever made in the English tongue to look the facts of the Old Testament manfully in the face!

the ABSOLUTE RELIGION. Both set bounds to man, which must be reached, if they are not already. Both represent great truths, out of which their excellence and power proceed; but both great falsehoods, which impoverish their excellence. Each is too narrow for the soul. Should the persons who sit in these churches rise to the stature of *men*, they must carry away roof and steeple; for man is greater than the churches he allows to tyrannize over him.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE PARTY THAT ARE NEITHER CATHOLICS NOR PROTESTANTS.

THIS party has an Idea wider and deeper than that of the Catholic or Protestant,—namely, that *God still inspires men as much as ever; that He is immanent in spirit as in space.* For the present purpose, and to avoid circumlocution, this doctrine may be called SPIRITUALISM. This relies on no church, tradition, or Scripture, as the last ground and infallible rule; it counts these things teachers, if they teach, not masters—helps, if they help us, not authorities. It relies on the divine presence in the soul of man; the eternal Word of God, which is TRUTH, as it speaks through the faculties he has given. It believes that God is near the soul, as matter to the sense; thinks the canon of revelation not yet closed, nor God exhausted. It sees Him in Nature's perfect work; hears Him in all true Scripture, Jewish or Phœnician; feels Him in the aspiration of the heart; stoops at the same fountain with Moses and Jesus, and is filled with living water. It calls God Father, not King; Christ brother, not Redeemer; heaven home; Religion nature. It loves and trusts, but does not fear. It sees, in Jesus, a man living manlike, highly gifted, and living with blameless and beautiful fidelity to God, stepping thousands of years before the race of man; the profoundest religious genius God has raised up; whose words and works help us to form and develope the native idea of a complete reli-

gious man. But he lived for himself; died for himself; worked out his own salvation;—and we must do the same, for one man cannot live for another, more than he can eat or sleep for him. It is no personal Christ, but the Spirit of Wisdom, Holiness, Love, that creates the well-being of man; a life at one with God. The divine incarnation is in all mankind.

The aim it proposes is a complete union of man with God, till every action, thought, wish, feeling, is in perfect harmony with the Divine Will. It makes Christianity not the point man goes through in his progress, as the Rationalist—not the point God goes through in his development, as the Supernaturalist; but ABSOLUTE RELIGION, the point where man's will and God's will are one and the same. Its SOURCE is absolute, its AIM absolute, its METHOD absolute. It lays down no creed, asks no symbol; reverences exclusively no time nor place, and therefore can use all time and every place. It reckons forms useful to such as they help: one man may commune with God through the bread and the wine, emblems of the body that was broke, and the blood that was shed, in the cause of truth; another may hold communion through the moss and the violet, the mountain, the ocean, or the scripture of suns which God has writ in the sky;—it does not make the means the end; it prizes the signification, more than the sign. It knows nothing of that puerile distinction between Reason and Revelation; never finds the alleged contradiction between good sense and Religion. Its Temple is all space; its Shrine, the good heart; its Creed, all truth; its Ritual, works of love and utility; its Profession of faith, a divine life—works without, faith within, love of God and man. It bids man do duty, and take what comes of it—grief or gladness In every desert it opens fountains of living water; gives balm for every wound, a pillow in all tempests, tranquillity in each distress. It does good for goodness' sake; asks no pardon for its sins, but gladly serves out the time. It is

meek and reverent of truth, but scorns all falsehood, though upheld by the ancient and honourable of the earth. It bows to no idols, of wood or flesh, of gold or parchment, or spoken wind; neither Mammon, neither the Church, nor the Bible, nor yet Jesus, but God only. It takes all helps it can get; counts no good word profane, though a heathen spoke it—no lie sacred, though the greatest prophet had said the word. Its redeemer is within—its salvation within; its heaven and its oracle of God. It falls back on perfect Religion; asks no more—is satisfied with no less. The personal Christ is its encouragement, for he reveals the possible of man. Its watchword is, BE PERFECT AS GOD. With its eye on the Infinite, it goes through the striving and the sleep of life; equal to duty, not above it; fearing not whether the ephemeral wind blow east or west. It has the strength of the Hero, the tranquil sweetness of the Saint. It makes each man his own priest; but accepts gladly him that speaks a holy word. Its prayer in words, in works, in feeling, in thought, is this,—THY WILL BE DONE!—its Church that of all holy souls, the Church of the first-born, called by whatever name.*

Let others judge the merits and defects of this scheme. It has never organized a church; yet in all ages, from the earliest, men have more or less freely set forth its doctrines. We find these men among the despised and forsaken; the world was not ready to receive them. They have been stoned and spat upon in all the streets of the world. The "pious" have burned them as haters of God and man; the "wicked" called them bad names, and let them go. They have served to flesh the swords of the Catholic church, and feed the fires of the Protestant. But flame and steel will not consume them;—the seed they have sown is quick in many a heart; their memory blessed by such as live divine.

* It is unnecessary to enlarge on this scheme, since so much has been said of it already. See Book I. Ch. VII. § 3, and Book II. Ch. VIII., and Book III. Ch. V.–VI.

These were the men at whom the world opens wide the mouth, and draws out the tongue, and utters its impotent laugh; but they received the fire of God on their altar, and kept living its sacred flame. They go on the forlorn hope of the race; but Truth puts a wall of fire about them, and holds the shield over their head in the day of trouble. The battle of Truth seems often lost, but is always won. Her enemies but erect the bloody scaffolding where the workmen of God go up and down, and with divine hands build wiser than they know. When the scaffolding falls, the temple will appear.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FINAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION.

Now then, if it be asked, what relation the Church sustains to the religious Sentiment, the answer is plain: THE SOUL IS GREATER THAN THE CHURCHES. Religion, as Reason, is of God; Christianity, the Absolute Religion, and therefore eternal, based on God alone; the Churches, Catholic and Protestant, are of man, and therefore transient. Let them say their say. Man is God's child, and free of their tyranny; he must not accept their limitations, nor bow to their authority, but go on his glorious way. The Churches are a human affair quite as much as the State; ecclesiastical, like political institutions, are changeable, human, subject to the caprices of public opinion. The divine right of Kings to bear sway over the body, and the divine right of the Churches to rule over the soul, both rest on the same foundation—on a LIE.

The Christian Church, like Fetichism and Polytheism, like the State, has been projected out of man in his development and passage through the ages; its several phases correspond to man's development and civilization, and are inseparable from it. They are the index of the condition of man; they bear their justification in themselves; they could not have been but as they were. To censure or approve Catholicism, or Protestantism, is to censure or approve the state of the race which gave rise to these forms; to con-

demn absolute Religion, called by whatever name, is to condemn both man and God.

Jesus fell back on God, on absolute Religion, absolute Morality; the truth its own authority, his works his witness. The early Christians fell back on the authority of Jesus; their successors, on the Bible, the work of the apostles and prophets; the next generation, on the Church, the work of the apostles and fathers. The world retreads this ground. Protestantism delivers us from the tyranny of the Church, and carries us back to the Bible. Biblical criticism frees us from the thraldom of the Scripture, and brings us to the authority of Jesus. Philosophical Spiritualism liberates us from all personal and finite authority, and restores us to God, the primeval fountain whence the Churches, the Scriptures, and Jesus, have drawn all the water of life wherewith they filled their urns. Thence, and thence only, shall mankind obtain absolute Religion and spiritual well-being. Is this a *retreat* for mankind? No, it is progress without end. The race of men never before stood so high as now. With suffering, tears, and blood, they have toiled, through barbarism and war, to their present height, and we see the world of promise opening upon our eye. But what is not behind is before us.

Institutions arise as they are needed, and fall when their work is done;—of these things nothing is fixed. Corporeal despotism is getting ended: will the spiritual tyranny last forever? A will above our puny strength marshals the race of men, using our freedom, virtue, folly, as instruments to one vast end—the harmonious development of man. We see the art of God in the web of a spider and the cell of a bee, but have not skill to discern it in the march of man. We repine at the slowness of the future in coming, or the swiftness of the past in fleeing away; we sigh for the fabled "Millennium" to advance, or pray Time to restore us the Age of Gold. It avails nothing;—we cannot hurry God, nor retard him. Old schools and new schools seem as men

that stand on the shore of some Atlantic bay, and shout, to frighten back the tide, or urge it on. What boots their cry? Gently the sea swells under the moon, and, in the hour of God's appointment, the tranquil tide rolls in, to inlet and river, to lave the rocks, to bear on its bosom the ship of the merchant, the weeds of the sea. We complain, as our fathers: let us rather rejoice, for questions less weighty than these have in other ages been settled only with the point of the sword and the thunder of cannon.

If the opinions advanced in this Discourse be correct, then Religion is above all institutions, and can never fail; —they shall perish, but Religion endure; they shall wax old as a garment; they shall be changed, and the places that knew them shall know them no more forever; but Religion is ever the same, and its years shall have no end.

THE CONCLUSION.

"Changes are coming fast upon the world. In the violent struggle of opposite interests, the decaying prejudices that have bound men together in the old forms of society are snapping asunder, one after another. Must we look forward to a hopeless succession of evils, in which exasperated parties will be alternately victors and victims, till all sink under some one power, whose interest it is to preserve a quiet despotism? Who can hope for a better result, unless the great lesson be learnt, that there can be no essential improvement in the condition of society, without the improvement of men as moral and religious beings; and that this can be effected only by religious TRUTH? To expect this improvement from any form of false religion, because it is called religion, is as if, in administering to one in a fever, we were to take some drug from an apothecary's shelves, satisfied with its being called medicine."—ANDREWS NORTON: *Statement of Reasons, &c.*, Preface, p. xxii.–xxxiii.

"What greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of Worship? Then all things go to decay. Genius leaves the temple to haunt the senate, or the market. Literature becomes frivolous. Science is cold. The eye of youth is not lighted by the hope of other worlds, and age is without honour. In the soul let the redemption be sought. In one soul, in your soul, there are resources for the world. The stationariness of religion; the assumption that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus, by representing him as a man, indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that he speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity—a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man—is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man, or person, old and departed."—RALPH WALDO EMERSON: *Address in Divinity College, &c.*, p. 24–25.

THE CONCLUSION.

I. OF THE POPULAR THEOLOGY.

THEOLOGY is the science of Religion. It treats of man, God, and the relation between man and God, with the duties which grow out of that relation. It is both queen and mother of all science; the loftiest and most ennobling of all the speculative pursuits of man. But the popular theology of this day is no science at all, but a system of incoherent notions, woven together by scholastic logic, and resting on baseless assumptions. The pursuit thereof in the popular method does not elevate;—there is in it somewhat not holy. It is not studied as science, with no concern except for the truth of the conclusion. We wish to find the result as we conceived it to be; as Bishop Butler has said, "People habituate themselves to let things pass through their minds, rather than to think of them. Thus by use they become satisfied merely with seeing what is said, without going any further." Our theology has two great Idols, the BIBLE and CHRIST: by worshipping these, and not God only, we lose much of the truth they both offer us. Our theology relies on assumptions, not ultimate facts; so it comes to no certain conclusions—weaves cobwebs, but no cloth.

The popular Theology rests on these main assumptions, —THE DIVINITY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE DIVINITY OF THE BIBLE. What is the value of each? It has been found convenient to assume both. Then it has several important aphorisms, which it makes use of as if they were established

truths, to be employed as the maxims of Geometry, and no more to be called in question. Amongst these are the following: Man under the light of nature is not capable of discovering the moral and religious truth needed for his moral and religious welfare; there must be a personal and miraculous mediator between each man and God; a life of blameless obedience to the law of man's nature will not render us acceptable to God, and ensure our well-being in the next life; we need a superhuman being to bear our sins, through whom alone we are saved; Jesus of Nazareth is that superhuman, and miraculous, and sin-reconciling mediator; the doctrine he taught is revealed Religion, which differs essentially from natural Religion; an external and contingent miracle is the only proof of an eternal and necessary truth in morals or Religion; God now and then transcends the laws of nature, and makes a miraculous revelation of some truth; he does not now inspire men as formerly. Each of these aphorisms is a gratuitous assumption, which has never been proved, and of course all the theological deductions made from the aphorisms, or resting on these two main assumptions, are without any real foundation. Theologians have assumed their facts, and then reasoned as if the facts were established;—but the conclusion was an inference from a baseless assumption; thus it accounts for nothing. "We only become certain of the immortality of the soul from the fact of Christ's resurrection," says Theology. Here are two assumptions: first, the fact of that resurrection; second, that it proves our immortality. If we ask proof of the first point, it is not easy to come by; of the second, it is not shown. The theological method is false; for it does not prove its facts historically, or verify its conclusions philosophically. The Hindoo theory says, the earth rests on the back of an Elephant, the Elephant on a Tortoise. But what does the Tortoise rest upon? The great Turtle of popular theology rests on—an assumption. Who taught us the infallible divinity of the Bible, or the

Churches? "Why, we always thought so; we inherited the opinion, as land, from our fathers, 'to have and to hold, for our use and behoof, for ourselves and our heirs, forever.' Would you have a better title? We are regularly 'seised' of the doctrine; it came, with the divine right of kings, from our fathers, who, by the grace of God, burnt men for doubting the truth of their theology." This is the defence of the popular theology. We have freedom in civil affairs; can revise our statutes, change the administration, or amend the constitution: have we no freedom in theological affairs, to revise, change, amend a vicious theology? We have always been doing it, but only by halves, not looking at the foundation of the matter. We have applied good sense to many things,—Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures,—and with distinguished success; not yet to Theology. We make improvements in science and art every year: men survey the clouds, note the variations of the magnetic needle, analyze rocks, waters, soils, and do not fear that truth shall hurt them, though it make Hipparchus and Cardan unreadable. Our method of theology is false, no less than its assumptions. What must we expect of the conclusion? What we find.

If a school were founded to teach Geology, and the professors of that science were required to subscribe the geological creed of Aristotle or Paracelsus, and swear solemnly to interpret facts by that obsolete creed, and maintain and inculcate the geological faith as expressed in that creed, in opposition to Wernerians, Bucklandians, Lyellians, and all other geological heresies, ancient or modern; if the professors were required to subscribe this every five years, and no pupil was allowed the name of Geologist, or permitted peacefully to examine a rock, unless he professed that creed;—what would men say to the matter? No one thinks such a course strange in Theology; our fathers did so before us. In plain English, we are afraid of the truth. "God forbid," said a man famous in his day, "that our

love of truth should be so cold as to tolerate any erroneous opinion"—but our own. Any change is looked on with suspicion. If the drift-weed of the ocean be hauled upon the land, men fear the ocean will be drank up, or blown dry; if the pine-tree rock, they exclaim, the mountain falling cometh to nought. How superstitiously men look on the miracle question, as if the world could not stand if the miracles of the New Testament were not real!

The popular Theology does not aim to prove absolute Religion, but a *system of doctrines*. Now the problem of theology is continually changing. In the time of Moses it was this: To separate Religion from the Fetichism of the Canaanites and the Polytheism of the Egyptians, and connect it with the doctrine of one God. No doubt Jannes and Jambres exclaimed with pious horror, "What! give up the garlic and the cats which our fathers prayed to and swore by! We shall never be guilty of that infidelity." But the Priesthood of Garlic came to an end, and the world still continued, though the Cats were not worshipped. In the time of Christ, the problem was: To separate Religion from the obsolete ritual of Moses. We know the result. The Scribes and Pharisees were shocked at the thought of abandoning the ritual of Moses! But the ritual went its way. In the time of Luther, a new problem arose: To separate Religion from the forms of the Catholic Church. The issue is well known. In our times, the problem is: To separate Religion from whatever is finite,—church, book, person,—and let it rest on its absolute truth.* Numerous questions come up for discussion: Is Christianity absolute Religion? What relation does Jesus bear to the human race? What relation does the Bible sustain to it? We have nothing to fear from truth, or for truth, but everything to hope. It is about Theology that men quarrel, not about Religion; that is but one.

* See Miscellaneous Writings, Art. XII.

II. OF THE POPULAR CHRISTIANITY.

Coming away from the Theology of our time, and looking at the public Virtue, as revealed in our life, political, commercial, and social, and seeing things as they are, we must come to this conclusion: Either Christianity — absolute Religion — is false and utterly detestable, — or else modern Society, in its basis and details, is wrong, all wrong: there is no third conclusion possible. Christianity demands a divine life; Society, one mean and earthly. Christianity says — its great practical maxim — "We that are strong ought to bear the burthens of the weak;" Society — "We that are strong must make the weak bear our burthens;" and it does this daily. The Strong do not compel the Weak as heretofore, mainly with a sword, nor bind them exclusively in fetters of iron: they compel with an idea, and chain with manacles unseen, but felt. Who does the world's work? — he that receives most largely the world's good? It needs not that truisms be repeated. Now it is a high word of Christianity — "He that is greatest shall be your servant." What is the corresponding word of Society? Everybody knows it. Do we estimate *greatness* in this way, by the man's achievements for the public welfare? Oh no! we have no such vulgar standard! Men of "superior talents and cultivation," — do we expect them to be great by serving mankind? Nay, by serving themselves!

Religion is love of God and man. Is that the basis of action with us? A young man setting out in life, and choosing his calling, says this to himself: "*How can I get the most ease and honours out of the world, returning the least of toil and self-denial?*" That is the philosophy of many a life; the very end of even what is called the "better class" of society. Who says, "This will I do; I will be a man, a whole complete man, as God made me; take care of myself, but serve my brother, counting my strength HIS,

not his MINE; I will take nothing from the world which is not honestly, truly, manfully earned?" Who puts his feet forward in such a life? We call such a man a FOOL. Yes, Jesus of Nazareth is a fool, tried by the penny-wisdom of this generation. We honour him in our Sunday talk; hearing his words, say solemnly, as the parasites of Herod, "It is the voice of a God, not of a man!" and smite a man on both cheeks who does not cry Amen! But all the week long, we blaspheme that great soul, who speaks though dead, and call his word, a Fool's talk. That is the popular Christianity. We can pray as well as the old Pharisee—"Lord, we thank thee we are not as other men; as the Heathen Socrates, who knew nothing; as the 'Infidel,' who cannot believe contradictions and absurdities. We say grace before meat; attend to all the church-ordinances; can repeat the creed, and we believe every word of both thy Testaments, Oh Lord! What wouldst thou more? We have fulfilled all Righteousness."

Alas for us! we have taken the name of Jesus in our church, and psalm-singing. We can say, "Lord! Lord! no man ever spake as thou." But our Christianity is talk; it is not in the Heart, nor the Hand, nor the Head, but only in the tongue. Could that Great Man, whose soul bestrides the world to bless it, come back again, and speak in bold words, to our condition, follies, sins, his denunciation and his blest beatitudes, rooting up with his "Woe-unto-you, Hypocrites!" what was not of God's planting, and calling things by right names,—how should we honour him? As Annas and Caiaphas and their fellows honoured that "Galilean and no prophet"—with spitting and a cross. But it costs little to talk and to pray.

A divine manliness is the despair of our churches. No man is reckoned good who does not believe in sin, and human inability. We seem to have said—"Alas for us! we defile our week-days by selfish and unclean living; we dishonour our homes by low aims and lack of love, by sensua-

lity and sin. We debase the sterling word of God in our soul; we cannot discern between good and evil, nor read nature aright, nor come at first-hand to God; therefore let us set one day apart from our work; let us build us an house which we will enter only on that day trade does not tempt us; let us take the wisest of books, and make it our oracle; let it save us from thought, and be to us as a God; let us take our brother to explain to us this book, to stand between us and God; let him be holy for us, pray for us, represent a divine life. We know these things cannot be, but let us make believe." The work is accomplished, and we have the Sabbath, the Church, the Bible and the Ministry; each beautiful in itself, but our ruin when made the substitutes for holiness of heart and a divine life.

In Christianity we have a Religion wide as the East and the West; deep and high as the Nadir and Zenith; certain as Truth, and everlasting as God. But in our life we are heathens. He that fears God becomes a prey. To be a Christian, with us, in speech and action, a man must take his life in his hand, and be a lamb among the wolves. Does Christianity enter the counting-room—the senate-house—the jail? Does it look on ignorance and poverty, seeking to root them out of the land? The Christian doctrine of work and wages is a plain thing: he that wins the staple from the maternal earth; who expends strength, skill, taste, on that staple, making it more valuable; who aids men to be healthier, wiser, better, more holy,—he does a service to the race; does the world's work. To get commodities won by others' sweat, by violence and the long arm, is ROBBERY —the ancient Roman way; to get them by cunning and the long head, is TRADE—the modern Christian way. What say Reason and Jesus to that? No doubt the Christianity of the Pulpit is a poor thing;—words cannot utter its poverty; it is neither meat nor drink; the text saves the sermon. But the Christianity of daily life, of the street,—

that is still worse; the whole Bible could not save it. The history of Society is summed up in a word: CAIN KILLED ABEL; that of real Christianity also in a word: CHRIST DIED FOR HIS BROTHER.

From ancient times we have received two priceless treasures: the Sunday, as a day of rest, social meeting, and religious instruction; and the institution of Preaching, whereby a living man is to speak on the deepest of subjects. But what have we made of them? Our Sabbath, — what a weariness is it! what superstition defiles its sunny hours! And Preaching, — what has it to do with life? Men graceless and ungifted make it handiwork; a sermon is the Hercules-pillar and *ultima Thule* of dullness. The popular Religion is unmanly and sneaking; — it dares not look Reason in the face, but creeps behind tradition, and only quotes; — it has nothing new and living to say. To hear its talk, one would think God was dead, or at best asleep. We have enough of church-going, a remnant of our father's veneration, which might lead to great good; reverence still for the Sabbath, the best institution the stream of time has brought us; we have still admiration for the name of Jesus: a soul so great and pure could not have lived in vain. But to call ourselves Christians! — may God forgive that mockery! Are men to serve God by lengthening the creed and shortening the commandments? making long prayers, and devouring the weak? by turning Reason out of doors, and condemning such as will not believe our Theology, — nor accept a priest's falsehood in God's name?

Religion is Life. Is our Life Religion? No man pretends it. No doubt there are good men in all churches, and out of all churches; there have been such in the holds of pirate-ships and in robbers' dens. I know there are good men and pious women, and I would go leagues long to sit down at their blessed feet, and kiss their garments' hem. But what are the mass of us? disciples of absolute Religion? Christians after the fashion of Jesus of Nazareth? No —

only Christians in tongue. It is an *imputed* righteousness that we honour; not ours, but borrowed of Tradition; an "historical Christianity," that was, but is no more. A man is a Christian if he goes to church, pays his pew-tax, bows to the parson, believes with his sect, is as good as other people. That is our religion; what is lived, what is preached: "like people, like priest," was never more true.

It is not that we need new forms and symbols, or even the rejection of the old. Baptism and the Supper are still beautiful and comforting to many a soul. A spiritual man can put spirit upon these. To many they are still powerful auxiliaries. They commune with God now and then—through bread and wine, as others hold converse with Him forever through the symbols of nature, the winds that wake the "soft and soul-like sound" of the pine-tree; through the earliest violets of spring and the last leaf of autumn; through calm and storm, and stars and blooming trees, and winter's snows and summer's sunshine. A religious soul never lacks symbols of its own—elements of communion with God. What we want is the SOUL of Religion—Religion that thinks and works: its SIGN will take care of itself.

With us, Religion is a nun. She sits, of week-days, behind her black veil, in the church; her hands on her knees; making her creed more unreadable; damning "infidels" and "carnal Reason:" she only comes out in the streets of a Sunday, when the shops are shut, and temptation out of sight, and the din of business is still as a baby's sleep. All the week, nobody thinks of that joyless vestal. Meantime strong-handed Cupidity, with his legion of devils, goes up and down the earth, and presses Weakness, Ignorance, and Want into his service; sends Bibles to Africa on the deck of his ship, and Rum and Gunpowder in the hold, knowing that the Church will pray for "the outward bound." He brings home—most Christian Cupidity!—images of himself which God has carved in ebony—to Christianize and

bless the sable son of Ethiopia! Verily we are a Christian people! zealous of good works! drawing nigh unto God—with our lips! Lives there a savage tribe our sons have visited, that has not cause to curse and hate the name of Christians, who have plundered, polluted, slain, enslaved their children? Not one, the wide world round, from the Mandans to the Malays. If there were but half the Religion in all Christendom, that there is talk of it during a "Revival" in a village,—at the baseness—political, commercial, social baseness daily done in the world, such a shout of indignation would go up from the four corners of the earth, as should make the ears of Cupidity tingle again, and hustle the oppressor out of creation!

The Poor, the Ignorant, the Weak, have we always with us: inasmuch as we do good unto *them*, we serve God; inasmuch as we do it not unto the least of them, we blaspheme God, and cumber the ground we tread on. Was there no meaning in that old word—"He that knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes"? They are already laid upon us. Religion meant something with Paul; something with Jesus: what does it mean with us? a divine life from infancy to age? divine all through? Oh no! a cheaper thing than that: it means talk, creed-making, and creed-believing, and creed-defending. We Christians of the "nineteenth century" have many "inventions to save labour;" a process by which "a man is made as good a Christian in five minutes as in fifty years." Behold Christianity made easy! Do men love Religion and its divine life, as Gain and Trade? Is it the great moving principle with us? something loved for itself—something to live by? Oh no! Nobody pretends it.

No wonder "ministers cannot bear to hear the truth spoken:" five minutes' talk will not weigh down fifty years' work, save in the Church's balance. The Christianity of the Church stands at the corner of the street, and bellows till all rings again from Cape Sable to the Lake of the Woods,

if a single "heretic" lift up his voice, though never so weak, in the obscurest corner of the earth: But Giant Sin may go through the land with his hideous rout; may ride over the poor rough-shod, and burn the standing corn, and poison the waters of the nation, and shake the very church till the steeple rock—and there shall not a dog wag his tongue. When did the Christianity of the Church leave a heresy unscathed? when did it ever denounce a popular sin—the desolations of intemperance—our butchery of Indians—the soul-destroying traffic in the flesh and blood of men "for whom Christ died"? These things need no comment;—they tell their own tale. Where is the Infidelity of this age? Read the religious newspapers. We have a *theological* Religion to defend with tracts, sermons, and scandal: it needs all that to defend it.

No wonder young men, and young women too, of the most spiritual stamp, lose their reverence for the Church, or come into it only for a slumber—irresistible, profound, and strangely similar to death. What concord hath freedom with slavery? Talent goes to the world, not to the churches. No wonder Unbelief scoffs in the public print, "beside what that grim wolf, with *privy paw, daily devours apace, and nothing said.*" There is an unbelief, worse than the public scoffing, though more secret, which needs not be spoken of. No wonder the old cry is raised, THE CHURCH IN DANGER, as its crazy timbers sway to and fro if a strong man tread its floors. But what then? What is true never fails. Religion is permanent in the race—Christianity everlasting as God. These can never perish, through the treachery of their defenders, or the violence of their foes. We look round us, and all seems to change: what was solid last night, is fluid and passed off to-day; the theology of our fathers is unreadable; the doctrines of the middle-age "divines" are deceased like them. Shall our mountain stand? "Everywhere is instability and insecurity." It is only men's heads that swim; not the stars that run round. The soul of man remains the

same; Absolute Religion does not change; God still speaks in Reason, Conscience, Faith—is still immanent in his children. We need no new forms: the old, Baptism and the Supper, are still beautiful to many a soul, and speak blessed words of religious significance. Let them continue for such as need them. We want real Christianity, the Absolute Religion, preached with faith, and applied to life,—BEING GOOD, AND DOING GOOD. There is but one real Religion; we need only open our eyes to see that; only live it, in love to God, and love to man, and we are blessed of Him that liveth forever and ever!

THE END.

ROBERT HARDIE AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

WORKS

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THE PROSPECTIVE REVIEW:

A Quarterly Journal of Theology and Literature.

Respice, Aspice, PROSPICE.—*St. Bernard.*

EDITED BY

The Rev. JAMES MARTINEAU, of Liverpool;
The Rev. JOHN JAMES TAYLER, of Manchester;
The Rev. JOHN HAMILTON THOM, of Liverpool;
The Rev. CHARLES WICKSTEED, of Leeds.

THE PROSPECTIVE REVIEW is devoted to a free THEOLOGY, and the moral aspects of LITERATURE. Under the conviction that lingering influences from the doctrine of verbal inspiration are not only depriving the primitive records of the Gospel of their true interpretation, but even destroying faith in Christianity itself, the Work is conducted in the confidence that only a living mind and heart, not in bondage to any letter, can receive the living *spirit* of Revelation; and in the fervent belief that for all such *there is* a true Gospel of God, which no critical or historical speculation can discredit or destroy. It aims to interpret and represent Spiritual Christianity, in its character of the Universal Religion. Fully adopting the sentiment of Coleridge, that "the exercise of the reasoning and reflective powers, increasing insight, and enlarging views, are requisite to keep alive the substantial faith of the heart,"—with a grateful appreciation of the labours of faithful predecessors of all Churches,—it esteems it the part of a true reverence not to rest in their conclusions, but to think and live in their spirit. By the name "PROSPECTIVE REVIEW" it is intended to lay no claim to Discovery, but simply to express the *desire* and the *attitude* of Progress; to suggest continually the Duty of using Past and Present as a trust for the Future; and openly to disown the idolatrous Conservatism, of whatever sect, which makes Christianity but a lifeless formula.

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